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Simpson, L. F.,

THE

LITERATURE OF ITALY.

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LITERATURE OF ITALY.

FROM

THE ORIGIN OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE TO THE DEATH OF BOCCACIO.

A Historical Sketch.

BY

LEONARD FRANCIS SIMPSON.

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PREFACE.

In the following pages the Author has endeavoured to present to the English student a survey of the History of the Literature of Italy from the origin of the Italian language to the death of Boccacio; that is to say, from the year 1218, when Frederick II. of Sicily introduced the Italian dialect at his court, to the latter end of the fourteenth century.

This epoch, which covers a space of one hundred and fifty-seven years, constitutes the most brilliant era in the history of Italian literature. At the same time it was the most eventful in her political annals. Dante, driven into exile, composed his immortal poem, whilst the dire feuds of Guelph and Ghibelline

devastated his native city. Rome witnessed her great revolution, which caused Petrarch for a time to bid a truce to his sighs for Laura, that he might indite epistles to Cola Rienzi, the last of the Roman Tribunes, and compose appeals to the Pope, to induce him to restore to the shores of the Tiber the papal see which Clement V. had transferred to the banks of the Rhone. Whilst Petrarch received the Poet's crown in the Capitol, Boccacio, by his hundred tales in prose, enriched the language of his country, and brought it to a state of perfection. In conjunction with Petrarch, he restored the literature of the Greeks in Italy. To the labours of these two scholars the world is indebted for the preservation of many valuable manuscripts which would otherwise have been irretrievably lost. In the midst of pestilence, civil war, and bloodshed, Literature and the Arts and Sciences flourished. Thus do we behold with admiration not unmixed with sadness, some fair flower blooming upon a ruined battlement, the symbol

of health and prosperity amidst surrounding desolation.

A residence of some years in Italy, and a careful study of the literature of the Italians, induced the Author to attempt the present sketch, in the hope that it might serve as a guide to the student, and in some measure supply the want which exists of a brief, yet correct sketch of the Literature of Italy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

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CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

PAGE

The Roman Empire.—The Kingdom of Italy.—Theodosius the Great divides the Roman Empire into Eastern and Western.—Honorius.—Alaric invades Italy.—Sack of Rome.—Valentinian III.—Other Roman Emperors.—Augustulus.—Fall of the Western Empire.—Odoacer is elected King of Italy.—Invasion of Theodoric King of the Goths.—The Lombards.—Charlemagne.—Restoration of the Western Empire.—Carlovingian line.—Conrad I.—The House of Saxony.—The House of Franconia, 1024-1125.—The House of Suabia.—Rudolph of Hapsburg.—State of Italy before and after the year 1000.—Origin of the Italian Republics.—The Lombard League.—The peace of Constance.—Effect of the Crusades upon Literature.—The University of Bologna.—Guido Aretino.—Frederick Barbarossa.—The Diet of Roncaglia.—Guarniero and his Pupils.—State of Rome.—Arnaldo di Brescia.—Origin of the denomination of Guelph and Ghibelline.—Frederick II.—The Council of Lyons, 1245 1

CHAPTER I.

Origin of the Italian Language.—Diversity of opinion respecting it.—Derivation from the Latin.—The Romano-rustico, or Lingua Romanza.—The language adopted and ennobled by the Provençaux.—In Italy Proper the language still uncultivated.—The Reason.—Frederick II., King of Sicily, introduces the Italian language at his court.—He founds the University of Naples.—His sons.—Pier delle Vigne.—His melancholy death.—His character vindicated by Dante.—Cullo d' Alcamo.—Guido delle Colonne.—Nina of Sicily.—Dante di Majano.—Guido Guinicelli.—Arnaud Daniel.—Tuscan Poets of the thirteenth century.—Guittone d' Arrezzo.—Brunetto Latini.—Guido Cavalcanti.—Prose writers of the thirteenth century.—Matteo Spinello.—Malespini.—Pier Crescenzi.—The Italian dialect universally adopted in Italy at the close of the thirteenth century 16

CHAPTER II.

PAGE

The Trecento.—Dante.—The Divina Commedia historically considered.—Its origin.—State of Europe on the death of Frederick II. of Sicily.—Manfred assumes the reins of government.—The crown of the kingdom of Italy offered to Richard Duke of Cornwall.—England grants supplies to the Pope.—Death of Pope Innocent IV.—Pope Alexander IV.—Pope Urban IV.—Intermarriage between the Houses of Sicily and Arragon.—Urban IV. induces Charles of Anjou to invade Sicily. Pope Clement IV.—Charles crowned at Rome.—Conditions imposed upon him by the Pope.—The battle of Benevento.—Dante's description of it.—Death of Manfred.—Dante's dialogue with him.—Conradin opposes Charles of Anjou.—He enters Rome and invades Naples.—Is made prisoner and executed.—His gauntlet sent to Peter of Arragon.—His death avenged by the Sicilian Vespers.—Condition of the other States of Italy —The death of Ugolino.—Francesca di Rimini.—Rise of the Visconti to power.—Biographical sketch of Dante.—His love for Beatrice.—Dante elected prior of Florence.—The civil wars of that city.—Charles of Valois enters Florence.—Dante sent as Ambassador to Rome.—Treachery of the Pope.—Dante condemned to the stake.—His exile.—How all these events served as materials for the Divina Commedia.—Pope Boniface VIII.—Dante at Oxford.—The Emperor Henry VII.—Dante waits upon him.—Dante sent as Ambassador to Venice.—He fails in his mission.—His disappointment.—His death.—Portrait of Dante 39

CHAPTER III.

Review of Dante's works.—The Vita Nuova.—Dante's Dream.—The Convito.—His Latin treatise 'De Monarchia.'—Libri della volgare eloquenza.—Miscellaneous writings.—His letters.—The Divina Commedia.—Its origin.—Dante and Homer compared.—Political bearing of the poem.—Its moral or æsthetical sense.—Its artistic structure.—Its unity.—The Inferno.—Purgatory.—Paradise.—The poem explained.—Sensation created in Italy on its first appearance.—It is publicly expounded at Florence, Bologna, and Pisa.—Dante's commentators.—English translators 79

CHAPTER IV.

Other Italian poets.—Cecco d' Ascoli.—Fazia degli Uberti.—Francesco da Barbarino.—Cino di Pistoja 149

CHAPTER V.

Petrarch.—His pretensions to fame.—Biographical sketch.—He has a narrow escape from drowning.—Petrarch's description of his youth.—Clement V. transfers the Papal Court to Avignon.—Jean Andrea.—Petrarch's love of old manuscripts.—His disgust

PAGE

for the study of the law.—His father burns his cherished manuscripts.—Death of his parents.—Pope John XXII.—Petrarch and his brother take orders.—His love for Laura.—Jacopo Colonna.—Historical sketch of the state of Europe at this period.—Daring feat of Jacopo Colonna.—Petrarch's friendship for him.—Cardinal Colonna.—Richard de Bury, envoy of Edward III. of England.—Old Stephen Colonna.—Invasion of Italy by John, king of Bohemia, assisted by France.—Petrarch's indignation.—Petrarch visits Paris.—Feuds of the Colonna and Orsini.—The Crusades.—Pope Benedict XII.—Petrarch's appeal to the Pope to return to Rome.—He is made Canon of Lombès.—Illicit love of Petrarch.—His children.—Petrarch visits Rome.—Reported visit to England.—His first visit to Vaucluse.—Description of Vaucluse.—The 23rd August, 1340.—Rome and Paris offer him the poet's crown.—Petrarch visits Naples and is examined by King Robert.—Petrarch is crowned in the Capitol on the 8th April, 1341.—His extraordinary dream.—He is made Archdeacon of Parma.—Pope Clement VI.—The Romans send an embassy to the Pope.—Petrarch and Rienzi.—State of Europe in 1343.—The Pope sends Petrarch as Ambassador to Naples.—The Grand Company.—Duke Werner.—Petrarch bewails the fate of Italy.—Ode to Italy . . 156

CHAPTER VI.

The Pope offers Petrarch the post of Apostolic Secretary.—He declines it.—Charles, son of John of Bohemia, is elected Emperor.—Degrading terms accepted by the new Emperor.—The crown is offered to Edward III. of England.—The Golden Bull.—The great revolution at Rome in 1357.—Cola Rienzi.—History of Cola Rienzi.—His friendship with Petrarch.—His correspondence with the Tribune.—Fall of Rienzi.—Petrarch obtains letters of legitimacy for his son Giovanni.—He admonishes Rienzi.—Earthquake in Italy.—The Plague.—Death of Laura.—Petrarch's dream.—Sonnet of Francis I.—Grief of Petrarch.—The jubilee at Rome.—Boccacio waits upon Petrarch as Ambassador from Florence to restore his civil rights.—Trial of Rienzi.—Petrarch appeals to the Romans in favour of Rienzi.—Pope Innocent VI.—The Visconti at Milan.—Civil war between Genoa and Venice.—Petrarch sent as Ambassador to Venice.—Cardinal Albornoz.—Return of Rienzi to Rome.—Execution of Montreal.—Death of Rienzi 197

CHAPTER VII.

Charles IV. enters Italy.—Revolution at Venice.—Execution of Marino Faliero.—Petrarch is sent as Ambassador to Prague.—The Battle of Poictiers.—The Emperor confers upon Petrarch the title of Count Palatine.—Boccacio visits Petrarch.—The Poet presents his library to the Republic of Venice.—Urban V.—Petrarch is again offered the post of Apostolic Secretary.—Leonzio Pilato.—Birth of a grandson.—The Pope resolves to

PAGE

return to Rome.—Joy of Petrarch.—Grief of the Cardinals.—Marriage of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, to Violante, daughter of Galeazzo Visconti.—Honour paid to Petrarch on that occasion.—Froissart present at the ceremony.—Death of Petrarch's grandson.—Petrarch's will.—He is taken ill at Ferrara.—He removes to Arqua.—Urban retires to Avignon.—Gregory XI.—Petrarch is sent as Ambassador to Venice.—His voice fails him.—Respect shown to him.—His death 245

CHAPTER VIII.

Review of Petrarch's writings.—His influence on the age in which he lived.—Revival of Greek Literature.—Dante and Petrarch compared.—His Latin compositions.—His poem "Africa."—Eclogues.—His letters.—His "Trionfo."—English translation . 267

CHAPTER IX.

Boccacio.—Points of resemblance between Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio.—Protection afforded to Literature by the Princes of Italy.—Biographical sketch.—Aversion of Boccacio to commerce.—He studies law under Cino di Pistoja.—A visit to the tomb of Virgil.—He falls in love with the daughter of the King of Naples.—Fiammetta.—Florence.—He is sent as Ambassador of the Florentine Republic to Ravenna.—His mission to the Emperor.—He is despatched as Ambassador to Rome.—The Decamerone.—His friendship with Petrarch.—His conversion.—He devotes himself to the study of Greek Literature.—Assisted by Leonzio Pilato, he translates the Iliad.—He visits Petrarch at Venice.—Petrarch's daughter.—He is taken ill.—He gives public lectures on Dante's poem at Florence.—His death 277

CHAPTER X.

Review of Boccacio's writings.—His Latin compositions.—His poems.—Italian prose writings.—His eclogues.—"La Teseide."—"Il Filostrato."—L'Amorosa visione —Il Ninfale Fiesolano.—Miscellaneous poems.—The Decamerone.—Il Filocopo.—La Fiammetta.—Il Corbaccio.—The Ameto.—His Life of Dante.—Comments on Dante.—His translations from the Greek . 295

CHAPTER XI.

Zanobi da Strada.—Sacchetti.—Historians of the fourteenth century.—The Villani.—Conclusion 309

APPENDIX 315

THE

LITERATURE OF ITALY.

INTRODUCTION.

The Roman Empire.—The Kingdom of Italy.—Theodosius the Great divides the Roman Empire into Eastern and Western—Honorius.—Alaric invades Italy.—Sack of Rome.—Valentinian III.—Other Roman Emperors.—Augustulus.—Fall of the Western Empire.—Odoacer is elected King of Italy.—Invasion of Theodoric King of the Goths.—The Lombards.—Charlemagne.—Restoration of the Western Empire.—Carlovingian line.—Conrad I.—The House of Saxony.—The House of Franconia, 1024-1125.—The House of Suabia.—Rudolph of Hapsburg.—State of Italy before and after the year 1000.—Origin of the Italian Republics.—The Lombard League.—The peace of Constance.—Effect of the Crusades upon Literature.—The University of Bologna.—Guido Aretino.—Frederick Barbarossa.—The Diet of Roncaglia.—Guarniero and his Pupils.—State of Rome.—Arnaldo di Brescia.—Origin of the denomination Guelph and Ghibelline.—Frederick II.—The Council of Lyons, 1245.

THE history of the Literature of Italy is so intimately connected with its political annals, the very language being the illegitimate offspring of the incursions of the savage hordes which invaded Italy in the fifth and subsequent centuries, that a brief historical sketch from the

division of the Roman Empire into East and West,—of the fall of the Western Empire,—the creation of a kingdom of Italy and the subsequent restoration of the Western Empire by Charlemagne, will, if not absolutely indispensable to the student, at least throw considerable light upon the dark page of events which preceded the formation of the Italian language.

Theodosius the Great was the last of the Roman emperors who ruled both over East
A. D. 379. and West. Before he died, he divided the empire between his two sons, giving the West to Honorius, the East to Arcadius, under the respective denominations of Western and Eastern Empire. Before the reign of Theodosius, the Roman Empire had, on more than one occasion, been divided between two or more emperors, but was nevertheless considered as an integral body, of which different members were governed by different chiefs, whose authority radiated from the same centre. After Theodosius, there were two empires entirely independent of each other. The Emperor of the West fixed his residence at Rome, or at some other city of Italy; the capital of the Emperor of the East was Constantinople. The Eastern Empire lasted for one thousand and fifty-eight

years, from Arcadius in 395, to Constantine Paleologus in 1453, when Constantinople was taken by Mahomed II., and became the seat of the Turkish Empire.

In the reign of Honorius, the first Emperor of the West, Alaric, king of the Goths, invaded Italy. He was defeated by the Imperial troops near Palentia, in 403. The check was only temporary. In 408, Alaric made a second invasion. Honorius entered into negotiation with the Goth; but a breach of the truce agreed upon having occurred, pending negotiations at Ravenna, Alaric stormed Rome, put numbers of the inhabitants to the sword, and reduced a great portion of the city to ashes.

A. D. 403. Invasion of Alaric.

A. D. 408.

Sack of Rome. 24 Aug. A. D. 410.

It was well for Italy that Alaric died in the same year;[1] but he had pointed out the high road to Rome to other barbarians. Forty-two years later, the mighty Hun was laying siege to Aquileja.

Invasion of Attila. A. D. 452.

Honorius, who had fled to Ravenna, died in the year 423, and was succeeded by Valentinian, the third emperor of that

Valentinian the Third. A. D. 423.

[1] On his way to invade Sicily, Alaric expired suddenly at Cosenza in Calabria. That the Romans might not discover his remains, he was buried in the bed of the river Busento. The prisoners employed to turn the course of the river were put to death.

name. From Valentinian to the fall of the Western Empire (424—478), there were no less than nine emperors, the last of whom, Augustulus, was dethroned by Odoacer, a chief of the Heruli, and the founder of the Kingdom of Italy.

Odoacer. A. D. 475.

During the reign of these nine emperors, the Western Empire had been continually a prey to the invasions of the Goth, the Vandal, and the Moor. These savage hordes poured into the south, from the north of Europe and from Asia, to seize upon the fertile soil of Italy. The emperors, finding themselves too weak to oppose them, drafted many of them into the Roman legions—a step which ultimately led to the fall of the empire. These were the mercenaries who revolted, having Odoacer for their chief.

The first act of the insurgent chieftain was to demand of Augustulus one-third of the territory of Italy, that he might establish a kingdom for himself and his followers. On the emperor's refusal, Odoacer advanced against Rome, deposed Augustulus, caused himself to be declared King of Italy, and founded a new kingdom, which lasted two hundred and ninety-eight years—that is to say, from 476 to 774.

Odoacer reigned thirteen years. In 489,

Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths, invaded Italy. He was twice defeated, but gained a signal and final victory at Ravenna, in 490, when with his own hand he put Odoacer to death.

Theodoric. A.D. 489.

Death of Odoacer. A.D. 490.

The Ostrogoths remained in power for seventy-five years, when they were subdued by the Longobardi, or Lombards, who held sway for the term of two hundred and six years, when they were subjugated by Charlemagne.

Charlemagne. A.D. 774.

With a view to the restoration of the Western Empire, Charlemagne had himself solemnly crowned emperor at Rome, by Pope Leo III. The dominions of Charlemagne included France, Germany, Italy, and a great part of Spain, and they were known by the appellation of the German Empire.

Restoration of the Western Empire. A.D. 800.

The House of Charlemagne gave nine emperors to this Roman-German Empire, in the following line of succession :—Charlemagne; Louis le Débonnaire; Lothario I.; Louis II.; Charles II., surnamed Le Chauve, or the Bald; Louis III.; Charles III., surnamed Le Gros, or the Fat; Arnold; and Louis IV. On the death of Louis IV., in 912, the empire became elective; and in virtue of this right, Conrad,

The empire becomes electoral.

Duke of Franconia, was elected emperor, to the exclusion of Charles the Simple of France. On the death of Conrad (918—919), Henry of Saxony was elected.

The House of Saxony gave five emperors during a period of one hundred and five years (919—1024). Their order of succession is as follows :—Henry I., who married a daughter of Louis III., a warlike prince, who routed the Vandals, and compelled Charles the Simple to renounce all claims to the empire, and who refused to be crowned by the Pope. Otho I., or the Great, who was crowned by Pope John XII., whom he afterwards deposed, arrogating to himself the right of nominating the Pope, and of granting investitures ; Otho II., Otho III., and Henry II.

On the death of Henry II., the imperial crown was conferred upon Conrad II. of Franconia. This prince received the imperial crown from Benedict IX., and was crowned King of Lombardy at Milan. The reign of the next emperor, Henry III., surnamed the Black, was one continued war with the Popes. He was succeeded by Henry IV. (the Great), who twice deposed Pope Gregory VII., and who was twice excommunicated. He was succeeded by Henry V.,

who, like his predecessor, was involved in broils with the Church. Lothario II., who followed, was succeeded by Conrad III. of Suabia, in which House the imperial crown remained for one hundred and thirty years, during the lives of six emperors, from 1139 to 1269. A.D. 1139–1269.

It was in the reign of Conrad III., that the Papal faction and the Imperialists assumed the party name of Guelph and Ghibelline. It was in this reign also that many of the Italian cities declared their independence, and formed the famous "Lombard League," against which Conrad's successor, Frederick I. (Barbarossa), waged so terrible a warfare. Barbarossa was succeeded by Henry VI., the same who kept the gallant Cœur-de-Lion a prisoner on his return from Palestine.[1] Philip, Duke of Suabia, is the next :. he was followed by Otto of Brunswick, who was succeeded by Frederick II., at whose court, in Sicily, the Italian language first assumed shape and form, and of whom more anon. A.D. 1152. A.D. 1197. A.D. 1208. Fred. II. A.D. 1218.

[1] "The emperor, Henry VI., who also considered Richard an enemy on account of the alliance contracted by him with Tancred, King of Sicily, despatched messengers to the Duke of Austria, required the royal captive to be delivered to him, and stipulated a large sum of money as a reward for his service."—*Hume.*

Frederick was succeeded by Conrad IV., A.D. 1250–1254. who was succeeded by William, Duke of Holland, in whose reign the Hanseatic Confederacy, or Protectionist League of the great commercial cities of Germany, was established. The next emperor, almost a nominal one, A.D. 1256. was Richard, Earl of Cornwall. The imperial crown was then offered to Alphonso of Castile, who accepted the dignity, but never set foot in Italy. On his way he was informed A.D. 1273. of the election of Rudolph of Hapsburg, with the title of King of the Romans.

For nearly seven centuries the intellect of Italy had smouldered under the ruins heaped upon it by war. In the eleventh century it was fanned into a flame which spread a genial light and warmth around.

The Crusades,[1] which threw open the East to the populations of the West, unfolding to the admiring gaze of the less cultivated Europeans the treasures and the master-pieces of Greek literature and art—the settlement of the Moors in the south of Italy, where they opened the

[1] The first crusade was led by Godfrey of Bouillon in 1096; the second by Conrad and Louis VII. in 1148; and the third by Frederick Barbarossa, Richard Cœur de Lion, and Philip Augustus, in 1189. Independently of these three great crusades, expeditions for the same end continually poured into the East.

renowned school of medicine at Salerno[1]—a school of jurisprudence established at Bologna, in which Irnerio (or Guarnerio) expounded the Roman law,[2] and Guido Aretino[3] a new system of music—all tended to arouse the Italians from the trance into which they had fallen, forgetful of their past glory, and of the laurels that once had wreathed the brows of their ancestors.

The eleventh century is a memorable epoch in the history of Italy. The superstitious fear that with the year one thousand the world was to end, vanished as the century swung round. The new year brought new hopes. Men drew a deep breath ; and, like mariners escaped from shipwreck, they prepared themselves for new adventures.

In the twelfth century, the Lombard cities, taking advantage of the dissensions between the Pope and the Emperor, nearly all declared their independence, which they maintained till the year 1152, when the youthful but warlike Frederick Barbarossa ascended the imperial throne.

The first step taken by this monarch was a

[1] *Vide* Tiraboschi. *Storia della Lett. Ital.*, vol. iii., p. 347 ; for the establishment of the Saracens or Arabs at Salerno.

[2] Born towards the close of the eleventh century. For an interesting account of his life, *vide* Tiraboschi, vol. iii., p. 370, *et seq.*

[3] *Vide* Tiraboschi, vol. iii., book iv., page 339, *et seq.*

descent into Italy for the purpose of coercing the Lombard cities to their pristine allegiance. In the month of March 1162, he razed Milan to the ground.[1] This led to the formation of the Lombard League, against which the emperor in vain hurled all the resources of his massive strength. After two and twenty years, in which seven fine armies perished from disease, or by the sword, he was at length constrained to lend an ear to negotiation.

By the famous peace of Constance, concluded on the 25th June, 1183, the independence of the cities that belonged to the League was recognised by the Emperor. They were to have a government of their own, and no further to be subject to his authority than was implied in an acknowledgment of his supremacy in cases of appeal, with the concession of some other nominal privileges. This treaty, which, to all appearance, contained the germs of social and political advancement, proved ultimately the source of great and serious calamities.

The first visible result of so violent and protracted a struggle was, the manifestation amongst the people of a greater elasticity and

[1] *Vide* Sismondi, Rep. Ital., vol. i., p. 359; and Tiraboschi, vol. iii., Book iv.

energy of mind. Under the government of their consuls, or communes, it became necessary for each city to frame a code of laws; this necessitated the study of jurisprudence. The municipal government of each city bore a miniature resemblance to the ancient republic of Rome.

Rome, once the central orb from which the brightest rays of intellectual light radiated far and wide, was now plunged back into the abyss of ignorance, her bosom torn by the feuds of her distracted children. A tribune in a monk's cowl, the eloquent but fanatic Arnaldo di Brescia,[1] had reëstablished the phantom of a republic, which lasted for ten years (1145—1155), when it vanished in the smoke of his funeral pile.

On the death of Adrian, the vail of the Church was again rent by schisms. Alexander III., who succeeded him in the papal dignity, was compelled to fly from the Vatican, the chair of St. Peter being successively contended for by various candidates. After ten years' exile,

[1] Arnaldo was a pupil of Abaillard. Vide Sismondi, Rep. Ital., Vol. i., pp. 293—299, and p. 315. The following notice was issued at Rome, on the 27th June, 1850, as a manifestation of the popular indignation against the severe measures of the government of Pio IX. "*Li* 27, *Giugno* 1850,—ARNALDO DA BRESCIA nato il 2 Luglio, fu bruciato vivo dai Preti perchè predicava la libertà dei popoli; percio la sera del 2 Luglio si farà *illuminazione generale.*"

Alexander III. was restored to Rome by French influence, and became in some measure the head of the Italian republics.[1]

Whilst the Lombard League was splitting into many small republics, a monarchy was being established in Sicily, where Frederick II., of glorious memory, was shortly to assemble around his throne a galaxy of talent and genius. These were the men who introduced the Italian language at his court.

On the death of Tancred, Count of Lecce, who was made king of Sicily, the sceptre of the kingdom passed into the House of Suabia. The Emperor, Henry VI., having espoused Constantia of Sicily, laid claim to the crown, and obtained it. Henry bequeathed the crown to his son, Frederick II.[2] When only two years of age, his father had him proclaimed king of Germany and Italy; but on the demise of Henry, two powerful rivals entered the lists to claim and contest the imperial crown—Philip, Duke of Suabia, and Otto, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria.

[1] The Lombard League having fortified a new city to resist the Emperor, gave it the name of Alessandria, as a mark of respect to the Pope.

[2] Frederick II., King of Sicily, was born at Jesi on the 26th December, 1194. He married, in 1209, Constance, daughter of the King of Arragon. He was crowned Emperor in 1220. He died in 1250.

An interregnum of ten years was the consequence, each assuming the title of emperor. On the death of Duke Philip, who fell by the dagger of an assassin in 1208, Otto took undisputed possession of the crown. Innocent III., to whose care Queen Constance had entrusted the young prince, denounced Otto as an usurper, and proclaimed Frederick the rightful heir to the throne. To maintain the title of the young prince, the Pope invoked the aid of the kings of Arragon and of France, but death prevented him from maturing his plans.[1] His successor, Pope Honorius III., refused to crown Frederick, even after the death of Otto, which occurred on the 19th of May, 1218, until the young prince had solemnly pledged himself to lead a crusade into the Holy Land.

Alive to the necessity of his presence in Germany and Italy, the young emperor delayed his departure for Palestine from day to day; and a contagion breaking out among his troops, he postponed it to an indefinite period. Meantime, Honorius had been called to his fathers (1227), and his successor, Gregory IX., of a more fiery and impatient temperament than his predecessor, launched an anathema against

[1] He died on the 6th July, 1216.

Frederick. The latter, finally, felt himself compelled to set sail for the Holy Land, which he did in the month of August, 1228, landing at St. Jean d'Acre; but, after hastily concluding a truce with the Sultan of Egypt, he returned suddenly and unexpectedly to Italy, to defend his own states against Gregory, who had raised a crusade against him. Having driven out the invaders, he turned his arms against the Lombard League. Gregory died in 1241, and was succeeded by Innocent IV., who, in the Council of Lyons, 1245, formally excommunicated the Emperor, declaring him to have forfeited the crown.[1]

Amid all the perplexities and dangers with which he was surrounded, the spirit of Frederick remained undaunted; he boldly faced every obstacle that opposed or threatened him; and while he fought the Pope with his right hand, he aimed well-directed blows at the Lombard League with his left. But until the day of his death, his career was one of incessant turmoil and strife. He died in 1250—according to some, poisoned by his natural son, Manfred[2]

[1] For an interesting account of this Council, *vide* Sismondi's Hist. des Repub. Ital., vol. ii., ch. xvi.

[2] Sismondi says he died of dysentery on the 13th June, 1250, in

—without having succeeded in subjugating the Lombard League, and with the additional mortification of leaving his son, Enzo, whom he had made king of Sardinia, a prisoner in the hands of the Bolognese.

We have very briefly adverted to the political struggles that distracted the reign of the magnanimous Frederick. We have now to speak of him as a poet and a man of letters; for it was at his court that the Italian language was first raised from obscurity to distinction, and became the favoured medium of celebrating the triumph of arms, and of recounting the deeds of gallantry and of love.

the fifty-sixth year of his age, having reigned thirty-one years as Emperor, thirty-eight as King of Germany, and fifty-two as King of Sicily.—Tiraboschi, *idem*.

CHAPTER I.

Origin of the Italian language.—Diversity of opinion respecting it.—Derivation from the Latin.—The Romano-rustico, or Lingua Romanza.—The language adopted and ennobled by the Provençaux.—In Italy Proper the language still uncultivated.—The Reason.—Frederick II., King of Sicily, introduces the Italian language at his court.—He founds the University of Naples.—His sons.—Pier delle Vigne.—His melancholy death.—His character vindicated by Dante.—Cullo d'Alcamo.—Guido delle Colonne.—Nina of Sicily.—Dante di Majano.—Guido Guinicelli.—Arnaud Daniel.—Tuscan Poets of the thirteenth century.—Guittone d'Arrezzo.—Brunetto Latini.—Guido Cavalcanti.—Prose writers of the thirteenth century.—Matteo Spinello.—Malespini—Pier Crescenzi.—The Italian dialect universally adopted in Italy at the close of the thirteenth century.

GREAT diversity of opinion exists respecting the origin of the Italian language. It is a point which the learned men of Italy have not been able to decide, though the majority are in favour of its derivation from the Latin, contending that it was first corrupted and then embellished.

But Leonardo Bruni, Gravina, Quadrio, and other eminent writers, maintain that the Italian language is of as ancient an origin as the Latin; that both were spoken at the same time in Rome, the former by the lower classes and in the ordinary transactions of daily intercourse, the latter and more classical language being reserved for

the tribune and public assemblies, and adopted in elegant composition—in a word, that the Latin was the courtly, or classical language, of Rome, whilst the Italian was the vernacular, or *patois.*

In support of this argument, the above-named writers quote passages from the works of comic writers who have placed expressions in the mouths of their characters, (taken from the lower classes,) which correspond with the Italian idiom of the present day—expressions which are not to be found in classical Latin authors, or in the official documents of the magistrates and high dignitaries of Rome. Maffei is of opinion that the Latin tongue was gradually superseded by the vernacular (co-existent with it), the nobler language having been submerged by the patois of the people.

Muratori, Zeno, Fontanelli, and others, unhesitatingly assert, and perhaps with more reason, that the Italian language is formed from the corruption of the Latin, with the addition of many foreign dialects, introduced at different periods into Italy by the incursion, or settlement of strangers (*barbari*); we have an analogous precedent in the formation of the English language.

The Latin tongue, says Muratori, continued for many centuries to be the language of the people after the invasion of Italy by the barbarians from the north ; the victors, less numerous than the conquered, learnt the language of the country they had taken possession of, first from the absolute necessity that existed of procuring the necessaries of life ; and, secondly, because it was more harmonious and pleasing to the ear ; but, he adds, they pronounced it badly, and corrupted it with their barbarous expressions. (*La imbastardivano colle loro barbare parole ed espressioni.*) The public ear became gradually accustomed to this jargon, and the Italians were soon not aware of the change which had been effected in their language, and still styled it the Latin tongue, though it had long ceased to be so in its purity.

To exemplify the process of this etymological metamorphosis, the Hun or the Goth asking for bread, converted the Latin *da mihi illum panem* into *da-mi-il-pane*.[1] To prove the formation of the Italian articles *il, la,* from the *ille illa* of the Latins, *loro* from *illorum,* and the dative *lui*

[1] "Non litteras modo sed syllabas permutat aut praeterit communis hominum error est." (Suet. in. vit. Aug.) This *patois* was styled militaris, vulgaris, rusticus sermo. Quinctilian (born A.D. 42) complains that in his time the Roman language was completely changed.

from *illui*, both Castelvetro and Muratori enter into circumstantial details and investigations, the enumeration of which would lead us beyond the proposed limits of the present work.

The transmutation, addition, or omission of particles or vowels was not, however, in itself sufficient to create a new language. The Latin tongue was still spoken, but it had ceased to be the noble language once heard at the court of the Cæsars, or poured forth with eloquence from the tribune by a Cicero. It had degenerated into a *Romano-rustico*, spoken indiscriminately by all classes of the population of European Latium. This *rustico-romano*, or *Lingua romanza*, was spoken by all the nations under the imperial sway of Charlemagne,[1] spreading over nearly the whole surface of Italy, the whole of the south of France, and a great part of Spain. It became the connecting link between the Gauls, the Italians, and the Spaniards—the medium through which they were enabled to carry on mutual traffic.

The Provençaux, or inhabitants of La Provence, a people much addicted to poetry, ennobled this dialect by adapting it to song, accompanying their verses with the guitar or

[1] Charlemagne, A.D. 772—814.

lute. These "knight-errants of gallantry" proceeded from castle to castle to break a lance in honour of the fair lady whose charms they sang; whence they were variously styled jongleurs, ménestrels, or troubadours.[1] Raimond, Duke of Provence, invited to his court all the men of letters and gallant gentlemen of France, Italy, and Catalonia; jousts and tournaments were held daily, and the famous Courts of Love, or "*Corte della gaja scienza*," were instituted.

In Italy proper, the language remained for a long time in a rude and unpolished state. The incessant wars between Guelph and Ghibelline prevented the assemblage of gay and brilliant courts, the parterres in which the flowers of elegant literature flourish best; the numerous petty states of Italy were either the slaves of internal discord or subjected to a foreign yoke. They were a prey either to the overbearing arrogance of the nobles, or to the licentious misrule of a factious mob. The only men that wielded the pen instead of the sword or dagger, were the monks and lawyers, but they wrote in a drawling Latin, peculiar to themselves, and which grated on the ear, and was as dry as the parchment upon which they scrawled. The

[1] From *trobar*, to find or invent.

civilised world, however, is indebted to them for copies of many valuable documents which would otherwise have mouldered to dust in the course of centuries.

To Frederick II., king of Sicily, is the honour due of being the first to encourage the development of the Italian language, by introducing it at his court, and studying it with his two sons, Manfred and Enzo, and his secretary, Pier delle Vigne. As a boy, Frederick was passionately fond of poetry; he wrote verses in the Italian language a century before Dante began the Divine Comedy. Some lines of the royal poet have been preserved.

His courts at Naples and Palermo were the rendezvous of men of talent and genius, or of such as had in any way distinguished themselves in field or song. "*La gente che aveva bontade veniva a lui da tutte le parti.*" In 1224 he founded the University of Naples, which soon flourished in that populous metropolis; he opened various schools at Palermo and in other cities of Sicily; he reorganised the Academy of Salerno,[1] which had been falling into decay; and he was a great patron of natural history,

[1] An Academy of Medicine, founded, it is supposed, by the Moors in the tenth century. *Vide* Tiraboschi, vol. iii., p. 346., *et seq.*

and wrote a book on hawking, in which he describes the various species of hawks, and the mode of their treatment.

Manfred and Enzo, his two sons, inherited the poetical tastes of their father. According to Matteo Spinello,[1] it was the custom of Manfred to enjoy the evening breeze on the sea-shore, accompanied by musicians singing songs to the sound of the lute. These two young men were fortunate in having for their tutor Pier delle Vigne, Secretary of State to Frederick, and a poet of no common order. The following lines will serve as a specimen of his talents in that way. If of no great merit considered as poetry, they will at least serve to demonstrate that the language had already acquired a certain degree of elegance, purity, and harmony. Awaiting the hour that is to bring him to his lady, thus sings Pier delle Vigne :—

" Com uom ch'è in mare, ed ha speme di gire,
Quando vede lo tempo, ed ello spanna,
Vostro amore mi tiene in tal desire,
E donami speranza e si gran giojà ;
Che non cura sia doglia, o sia martire,
Membrando l'ora ch'io venga da voi." [2]

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[1] A cotemporary of Frederick II. He was the author of a History of Naples and Sicily from the year 1247 to 1268. This is the first work that was written in prose in the Italian language.

[2] As one becalm'd at sea, eager to move,
Joyously greets the breeze that fills his sail,

Pier delle Vigne has a just title to fame, not only as a poet, but as an orator and a legislator. Born of humble parents, in the city of Capua, he succeeded, in despite of poverty, in prosecuting his studies at Bologna. His assiduity and zeal attracted the attention of the professors and of the emperor, who became his patron. Pier delle Vigne soon gained the confidence of his royal benefactor, who entrusted him with the highest offices of the state. He always demonstrated his devotion and gratitude to his friend and sovereign, displaying extraordinary talents and zeal in the many important missions with which he was entrusted. Pope Gregory IX., having excommunicated the emperor, Pier delle Vigne caused a public meeting to be called at Padua, and made an oration before the assembled people vindicating the conduct of Frederick. Selecting for his text the lines from Ovid :

> " Leniter ex merito quidquid patiare, ferendum est
> Quæ venit indigne pœna, dolenda venit ;"

he declared that if the emperor, (who was present,) had brought upon himself the excom-

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So warm desires, nurtured by thy love,
Hope and great joy upon my heart entail;
That I care not what ill or woe betide,
Knowing the hour that brings me to thy side.

munication, he would have publicly acknowledged his error, and submitted to the judgment of the Church. He appealed to the people to testify to the injustice of the proceeding of the Pope, and refuted one by one the allegations brought against his sovereign.

Pier delle Vigne wrote a series of letters which have been handed down to us.[1] These letters throw considerable light upon the transactions of the age he lived in, and supply abundant proof of the protection rendered to literature by the Sicilian monarch and his secretary.

Pier delle Vigne fell a victim to envy,

> "The common vice and pest
> Of Courts:"

Accused by his enemies of treachery to the emperor, he was sentenced to have his eyes put out, the execution of which he prevented by dashing his head to pieces against the walls of his dungeon.

In the thirteenth Canto of the Inferno, Dante vindicates the character of Pier delle Vigne. Accompanied by Virgil, the poet enters the

[1] An edition was published at Basle, 1740. *Vide* Tiraboschi, vol. iv. pp. 26, 27.

second compartment of the seventh circle of Hell, the abode of those who have committed suicide. The miserable wretches have been changed into trees, with a rough bark, whereon harpies build their nests. One of these trees is the unfortunate secretary of Frederick II. Virgil tells Dante to break off a branch, when blood trickles down from the wound. In a plaintive voice the tree tells its sad tale :—

"I it was who held
Both keys to Frederick's heart, and turn'd the wards,
Opening and shutting, with a skill so sweet,
That, besides me, into his inmost breast
Scarce any other could admittance find.
The faith I bore to my high charge was such,
It cost me the life-blood that warm'd my veins.
The harlot who ne'er turn'd her gloating eyes
From Cæsar's household, common vice and pest
Of Courts, 'gainst me inflam'd the minds of all;
And to Augustus they so spread the flame,
That my glad honors chang'd to bitter woes.
My soul, disdainful and disgusted, sought
Refuge in death from scorn, and I became,
Just as I was, unjust towards myself.
By the new roots which fix this stem, I swear,
That never faith I broke to my liege Lord,
Who merited such honor; and of you,
If any to the world indeed return,
Clear he from wrong my memory, that lies
Yet prostrate under envy's cruel blow."

Two authorities, whose attestation is not to be challenged—Dante and Petrarch—testify that

Sicily is the cradle in which the Italian language was nursed and cultivated. The former, in Book I., Chap. xii., of his "De Volgare Eloquenza," thus expresses himself:—"When we contemplate the fame bestowed upon the land of Sicily, we must blush for our princes who, leaving the track of heroes, follow in the footsteps of the ordinary rabble; but Frederick II. and his noble son, Manfred, gave proofs of their nobility and superiority of mind (fortune being propitious) by following pursuits worthy of men, and by disdaining such as were only fit for the brute creation. Whence men of high aspirations, and gifted with noble minds, endeavoured to follow the example of the majesty of such great princes. Wherefore it happened, that all Italian compositions of any merit in that century emanated from the court of these exalted monarchs. And as the seat of their royalty was in Sicily, whatever was composed by our ancestors was styled *Sicilian*, which denomination is retained even now; and it is not in the power of ourselves or of our descendants to alter that appellation."

Petrarch affirms that no one can deny that the good vernacular, "il buon vulgare," was first spoken in Sicily, and that at the court of

Frederick II. it was free from all coarseness, and was styled "aulico," or "Siciliano."[1]

Poetry has ennobled every language. Like the traveller, the poet leaves the beaten track of everyday life to wander by the banks of gushing streams where nature runs wild, and is exuberant. In the search after novelty, fresh and noble prospects burst upon him, for which he finds new terms and expressions. The language of the poet is first adopted by the orator and the statesman, and then becomes universal. The poets of Sicily presided over the birth of the Italian language.

But the first Sicilian poet of any note is anterior to Frederick II. and Pier delle Vigne.

Cullo d'Alcamo wrote a poem in the Sicilian dialect towards the year 1193.[2] Other poets flourished at the same time in Sicily; for instance, Odo delle Colonne and Arrigo Testa. But a cousin of Odo is the one who first deserves our notice.

In the year 1276, Guido delle Colonne occupied the post of Judge at Messina. Much of his time was devoted to literature. Muratori

[1] Trionfo d'Amore.

[2] *Vide* Tiraboschi, vol. iv., book iii., p. 339.

styles him the first poet of his century ("Il rimatore puì terzo tra i suoi contemporanei"). He wrote a history of the Trojan war in Latin prose, which was afterwards translated and adopted by the Academia della Crusca. Tiraboschi says that one John Boston, a monk in England in the fourteenth century, in a catalogue he compiled of ecclesiastical writers, some copies of which are to be found in England, mentions that Edward I., King of England, having landed in Sicily in the year 1273, on his return from the Holy wars, and having made the acquaintance of Guido, was so impressed by his wisdom and genius, that he persuaded him to accompany him to England. Tiraboschi, however, questions the correctness of John Boston's assertions.[1]

The ladies of Sicily are not without a share of poetic fame. Nina of Sicily acquired some renown as a poet. A rumour of her genius having reached the ears of a certain Dante, of Majano,[2] a poet of no small repute in the

[1] Tiraboschi, vol. iv., book ii., p. 290.

[2] No relation of Dante Alighieri, who, however, corresponded with him in verse, and speaks of him in eulogistic terms. Majano, having addressed an anonymous ode to Alighieri, the latter replies:

"Whoe'er thou be, my friend, thy writing shows
Thy knowledge great, and of no common kind:

thirteenth century, he indited an epistle to her in verse, in which he warmly expressed his admiration. The lady replied that it gratified her to possess so gentle a lover, and that it was her ardent desire to behold him, that she might judge whether his heart kept time with his verses. The correspondence was maintained, and fragments have been published in the "Raccolta dei Giunti." The verses, if not first-rate, are not deficient in sentiment.

The Italian soon spread from its birthplace, Sicily, to the Italian peninsula. Sonnets in the new and beautiful language appeared at Bologna, Perugia, Florence, Padua, and other cities. Foremost to emulate the Sicilians were the Bolognese, Guido Guinicelli, Fabrizio, and Onesto. Dante is lavish of his encomiums upon Guido Guinicelli, both in his treatise "De Volgare Eloquenza," and in the "Convito." In the twenty-sixth canto of the Purgatory, on the departed spirit of the Bolognese poet announcing

> Hence am I vex'd that I cannot disclose
> The esteem I feel for thee, which fills my mind."

And again, on a similar occasion:

> "My friend, thy very name's to me unknown,
> Likewise thy motive in addressing me;
> But this I know, thy learning is so shown
> That Fame shall make the wisest bow to thee."

itself as the shade of Guido Guinicelli, Dante exclaims :—

"With such pious joy
As the two sons upon their mother gazed
From sad Lycurgus rescued; such my joy
(Save that I more suppress'd it) when I heard
From his own lips the name of him pronounced,
Who was a father to me, and to those
My betters, who have ever used the sweet
And pleasant rhymes of love. So nought I heard
Nor spake; but long time thoughtfully I went
Gazing on him; and only for the fire,
Approach'd not nearer."

The spirit of Guido asks Dante why he seems so rejoiced to see him; Dante replies :—

"Those dulcet lays (I answered) which, as long
As of our tongue the beauty does not fade,
Shall make us love the very ink that traced them."

Guinicelli modestly points out the ghost of Arnaldo Daniello (Arnaud Daniel) the Prince of Provençal poets :—

"Who in love ditties and the tales of prose
Without a rival stands;"

and who, in the Provençal dialect, relates his history.[1] Of the early career of Guinicelli little

[1] Arnaud says :

"Tan m'abbelis votre cortois deman
Chi eu non puous, ne vueil a vos cobrire,
Jeu sui Arnaut, che plor, e vai cantan
Con si toot vei la spassada folor,
Et vie gian sen le jor, che sper, denan.
Ara vus pren pera chella valor,

is known, except that he was descended from a noble Bolognese family, who were partisans of the Imperialists. He died in the year 1276. Other Bolognese poets are honourably mentioned by Petrarch and later writers.

Of the Tuscan poets of the thirteenth century three only are deserving of notice,—Guittone d'Arezzo, better known as Fra Guittone, Brunetto Latini, Dante's tutor, and Guido Cavalcanti.

Guittone d'Arezzo was born, as his name implies, in the town of Arezzo; the appellation of Fra, or Frate, was given to him because he was a member of the fraternity of joyous knights

Che vus ghida al som delle scaliña,
Sovenga vus a temps de ma dolor."

Which, in the Italian, would read as follows :—

"Tanto m'abbelisce vostro cortese dimando,
Ch'io non mi posso ne voglio a voi celare;
Io sono Arnaldo che piango e vo cantando,
Veggio dolente la passata follia.
E veggio gaudente il giorno che aspetto dinanzi,
Ora vi prego per quel valore,
Che vi guida al sommo della scala,
Sovvengavi a tempo del mio dolore."

The similarity between the Provençal and the French is striking :

"Tant m'embellit votre courtois demande
Que je puis ni veux a vous me cacher,
Je suis Arnaud qui pleure et vais chantant," &c., &c.

Dante and Petrarch both place Arnaldo at the head of the Provençal poets. Sismondi, in his literature of the Troubadours, assigns the highest place, not to Arnaud Daniel, but to Arnaud de Marveil, another Provençal poet of great renown.

(Cavalieri gaudenti), an order instituted in the year 1208.[1] Fra Guittone was a prolific writer. The eighth book of Giunti's "Raccolta de Poeti Antichi," consists almost exclusively of odes and sonnets by Guittone. Forty letters by this Tuscan writer[2] are among the earliest samples of epistolary composition in the Italian language. Dante characterises his style as harsh and cold. A love of solitude and retirement induced Guittone, in the year 1293, to found the monastery of the Angioli at Florence, of the order of the Camaldoli. He did not live to see his plans carried out; he died in the following year.[3]

Brunetto Latini, whose celebrity is owing more to his having been Dante's tutor, than from his own writings, was born of a noble Florentine family. According to Villani he was a great philosopher, an expert rhetorician, and well versed in political science, having taught the Florentines how to manage the affairs of state

[1] A religious order. Their robes were white; the mantle, sable; the arms, a field argent, with a red-cross and two stars. Their duty was to defend widows and orphans, and to act as mediators. Like all religious orders, they had their own internal regulations. Report says, however, that "gaudenti" might not inaptly be translated, "jolly" friars; but there is reason to believe that the founders were upright and well-intentioned men.

[2] Published, with copious notes by Bottari, at Rome, 1745.

[3] Tiraboschi, vol. iv., p. 353.

on the principles of political economy.[1] Ser Brunetto was sent by the Guelphs, in 1260, as ambassador to Alphonzo, king of Castille; on his return he found that the Guelphs had been driven out of Florence by the Ghibellines, and he became an exile. He died in the year 1294. He was the editor of an Encyclopædia ("Il Tesoro"), which consisted of extracts from the Bible, from the books of Pliny the naturalist, and from other authors. The Tesoro (Treasure) is divided into three parts, each part being subdivided into books. His object seems to have been the compilation of a universal dictionary.

The first five books treat of the Old and New Testaments, the description of the elements, geography, and the natural history of birds, beasts, fishes, and serpents. The second part consists of two books, including the Moral Philosophy of Aristotle, and a treatise on Vice and Virtue. The third part is likewise divided into two books, the subjects of which are Eloquence, and the Art of Government. This work was

[1] "Fu un grande filosofo e fu un sommo maestro in rettorica, tanto in ben saper dire quanto in bene dittare . . . . Egli fu cominciatore e maestro in digrassare ì Fiorentini e fargli scorti in bene parlare e in sapere giudicare e reggere la nostra republica secondo la Politica."—*Giovanni Villani.*

originally written in French, Brunetto having sought a refuge in France when the Guelphs were driven out of Florence.

The first Italian version was published at Trevigi, in 1474, that portion relating to the Ethics of Aristotle having been translated by the celebrated Tuscan physician, Taddeo.[1]

Brunetto Latini is the author of another work, entitled, "Il Tesoretto;" this, however, is not an abrègé of the Tesoro, as its name would imply. According to some writers, Dante derived the idea of his "Divina Commedia" from this latter work. Brunetto translated some of the orations of Cicero, of which translation an edition was published at Lyons, in 1567. He is also the author of a work entitled "Il Pataffio," which, according to Perticari, is altogether and without dispute a most miserable production. It was probably on account of this work that Dante gave his tutor so warm a berth in the Inferno, though some of his commentators attribute the sultry station assigned to him, to the fact of Brunetto having been a Guelph, whilst Dante was a warm supporter of the Ghibellines.

In the fifteenth canto of the Inferno, Dante

[1] *Vide* Tiraboschi, vol. iv., book ii., p. 195.

is recognised by one of the condemned spirits, who seizes him by the skirt of his garment :—

"Thus narrowly explored by all the tribe,
I was agnized of one, who by the skirt
Caught me, and cried, 'What wonder have we here?'
And I, when he to me outstretch'd his arm,
Intently fix'd my ken on his parch'd looks,
That although smirch'd with fire, they hinder'd not;
But I remember'd him; and towards his face
My head inclining, answered 'Ser Brunetto!'"

Ser Brunetto—for it was no other than Dante's old master—predicts Dante's future fame and exile :—

"'If thou,' he answer'd, 'follow but thy star,
Thou canst not miss at last a glorious haven:
Unless in fairer days my judgment err'd.
And if my fate so early had not chanced,
Seeing the Heavens thus bounteous to thee, I
Had gladly given thee comfort in thy work."

Dante expresses the grief he felt at Brunetto's early death :—

"'Were all my wish fulfill'd,' I straight replied,
'Thou from the confines of man's nature yet
Hadst not been driven forth; for in my mind
Is fix'd, and now strikes full upon my heart,
The dear, benign, paternal image, such
As thine was, when so lately thou did'st teach me
The way for man to win Eternity.'"

Brunetto, before taking leave of Dante, recommends his work to him :—

"I commend my *Treasure* to thee
Wherein I yet survive; my sole bequest."

Guido Cavalcanti was one of Dante's earliest and bosom friends. Descended from one of the noblest families of Florence, Guido was a staunch Ghibelline, and the mortal enemy of Corso Donati, the leader of the Guelphs, from whom he received a severe wound in a duel. He married a daughter of Farinata degli Uberti. Like Dante he suffered banishment; but returned to his native city, where he died in the year 1300. Muratori quotes him as an example of the correctness and purity of style of the poets of the thirteenth century. Benvenuto da Imola styles Guido the second eye of Tuscan literature, of which Dante is the first.

Cavalcanti's poems are of a philosophical character. Dante speaks in affectionate terms of him in the "Vita Nuova." In the "Canzoniere," a collection of poems from the "Vita Nuova" and the "Convito,"[1] are two sonnets, of which the subjoined translation is from the able pen of the late Charles Lyell.

The first is from Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti :—

"Friend Guido, would that Lappo,[2] you, and I,
Were carried by enchantment far from care,

---

[1] *Vide* Life of Dante, chap. ii.

[2] Lappo was the son of the Florentine leader, Farinata degli Uberti, and brother-in-law of Guido.

And sailing in a bark upon the sea,
Where wind and wave our bidding should obey,
Where never fortune cross, nor weather foul,
To interrupt our joy should have the power;
And wishes ne'er to part should still increase,
While granted were the wish to live together.
And might the good enchanter place beside us
Our Beatrice, and Vanna, and the lady
Who stands pre-eminent among the thirty;
There would we never cease to talk of love,
And each fair dame I trust would be content,
As I am confident that we should be."

The second is from Guido to Dante. It proves the friendly intercourse which existed between the two poets :—

"I earnestly entreat thee, Dante, when
In company with Love thou Lappo see,
Think it not irksome to observe him well,
And write me word if Love a lover count him,
And if in truth he seem to serve the lady,
Or if he make a mere parade of service;
For men of his complexion oft assume
Love's counterfeit, through idleness and mischief.
Thou know'st that in the court where Love reigns king,
No man can serve his lord who vile is held
By lady there, who deeply is enamour'd.
Whether the servant did the suffering cause,
Thou easily wilt know, who know'st our style,
Which bears for its device, Reward and Merit."

The poets having set the example of adopting the Italian, instead of the Latin, language, the prose writers were not long in following it. The first work in prose of any consideration as to

bulk, is the "Chronicles" of Matteo Spinello, a Neapolitan. They extend from the year 1247 to 1268; but the merit of having first written history in elegant Italian is due to Ricordano Malespini, a Florentine, who died about the year 1281. His nephew, Francesco Malespini, continued his history down to 1286.

Towards the close of the thirteenth century, the Italian language became universal throughout Italy. When works appeared in Latin, they were almost immediately translated. This was the case with Pier Crescenzi's celebrated work on Agriculture, and the Pleasures of a Rural Life.

Pier Crescenzi was a native of Bologna. This work, which is dedicated to Charles II., King of Sicily, is divided into twelve books, or cantos. The name of the translator of the Latin manuscript into the Italian has been lost. "Whoever he was," says Bartoli, "at all events he has proved by the elegance of his style that the Italian language was spoken with correctness and purity in the thirteenth century, and whatever be his name, he has rendered an invaluable service to his country."

CHAPTER II.

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

The Trecento.—Dante.—The Divina Commedia historically considered.—Its origin.—State of Europe on the death of Frederick II. of Sicily.—Manfred assumes the reins of government.—The crown of the Kingdom of Italy offered to Richard Duke of Cornwall.—England grants supplies to the Pope.—Death of Pope Innocent IV.—Pope Alexander IV.—Pope Urban IV.—Intermarriage between the Houses of Sicily and Arragon.—Urban IV. induces Charles of Anjou to invade Sicily.—Pope Clement IV.—Charles crowned at Rome.—Conditions imposed upon him by the Pope.—The battle of Benevento.—Dante's description of it.—Death of Manfred.—Dante's dialogue with him.—Conradin opposes Charles of Anjou.—He enters Rome and invades Naples.—Is made prisoner and executed.—His gauntlet sent to Peter of Arragon.—His death avenged by the Sicilian Vespers. Condition of the other States of Italy.—The death of Ugolino.—Francesca di Rimini.—Rise of the Visconti to power.—Biographical sketch of Dante.—His love for Beatrice.—Dante elected prior of Florence.—The civil wars of that city.—Charles of Valois enters Florence.—Dante sent as Ambassador to Rome.—Treachery of the Pope.—Dante condemned to the stake.—His exile.—How all these events served as materials for the Divina Commedia.—Pope Boniface VIII.—Dante at Oxford,—The Emperor Henry VII.—Dante waits upon him.—Dante sent as Ambassador to Venice.—He fails in his mission.—His disappointment.—His death.—Portrait of Dante.

It is a common assertion by scholars, that literature and the arts and sciences flourish only under the shade of peace—that they court tranquillity and repose; yet never did the literary horizon of Italy display so rich a constellation of brilliant meteors as in the fourteenth

century—the famous "Trecento"—when she was distracted by internal discords and civil wars,—a century which produced a Dante, a Petrarch, and a Boccacio.

Dante's poem is, in a great measure, a history of the civil wars of his country. Dante took an active part in the political movements in Italy, and so closely allied is his political martyrdom with his literary fame, that a brief sketch of the state of Italy in the times in which he lived will throw considerable light upon many passages of his poem, which might otherwise be unintelligible to the student of Italian literature.

On the death of Frederick II. of Sicily, in 1250, Italy was as much convulsed as when that monarch ascended the throne. The feud between Guelph and Ghibelline was carried on with unabated fury, and another element of war had manifested itself in a rising struggle between the people and their rulers.[1] The Papal, or Guelph, faction was in the ascendant. So great was the joy of Pope Innocent IV. at the death of Frederick, that he indited a letter to the clergy of Sicily, in which he exultingly exclaims —"Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, for the storm that was lowering over your

[1] Revolution at Florence, 1251.

heads has been averted by the death of this man, and changed into refreshing breezes and nourishing dews."[1]

Frederick II. left five children : Conrad, who was crowned King of Germany during the life of his father ; Henry, son of a princess of England,[2] Frederick's second wife, who was to succeed Conrad if the former died without issue ; Manfred, a natural son, and the most talented of the family, whom Frederick had instituted by his will heir to the crown if Henry died childless ; and two other natural children, Frederick, Duke of Antioch, and Enzo, King of Sardinia, the latter a prisoner in the hands of the Bolognese when his father died.

Manfred was declared regent for his brother Conrad, who in 1251 left Germany at the head of an army to take possession of his Italian territories. The Pope, finding Conrad too strong for him, offered the imperial crown to Richard, Duke of Cornwall, brother of Henry III. of England, and brother-in-law to Frederick, who had married his sister, and whose son

[1] *Vide* Sismondi, Repub. Ital., vol. ii., p. 244. Innocent IV., Epist. L. viii. Ep. I. apud Raynaldi, 1251, sect. 3, p. 604.

[2] Isabella, third daughter of King John, by his second wife, Isabella of Angoulême.—*Vide* Hume.

Henry was heir presumptive to the crown of Sicily. Richard, for a short time, assumed the title of emperor.[1] His nephew died shortly afterwards. The Pope boldly accused Conrad of having poisoned him. Conrad died suddenly

[1] Hume says: "After the death of the Emperor Frederick II., the succession of Sicily devolved to Conradine, grandson of that monarch; and Mainfroy, his natural son, under pretence of governing the kingdom during the minority of the Prince, had formed a scheme for establishing his own authority. Pope Innocent, who had carried on violent war against the Emperor Frederick, and had endeavoured to dispossess him of his Italian dominions, still continued hostilities against his grandson; but being disappointed in all his schemes by the activity and artifices of Mainfroy, he found that his own force alone was not sufficient to bring to a happy issue so great an enterprise. He pretended to dispose of the Sicilian crown both as superior lord of that particular kingdom, and as vicar of Christ, to whom all kingdoms of the earth were subjected, and he made a tender of it to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, whose immense riches, he flattered himself, would be able to support the military operations against Mainfroy. As Richard had the prudence to refuse the present, he applied to the king, (Henry III.) whose levity and thoughtless disposition gave Innocent more hopes of success, and he offered him the crown of Sicily for his second son, Edmond. Henry, allured by so magnificent a present, without reflecting upon the consequences, without consulting either with his brother or the parliament, accepted of the insidious proposal; and gave the Pope unlimited credit to spend whatever sums he thought necessary for completing the conquest of Sicily. Innocent, who was engaged by his own interests to wage war with Mainfroy, was glad to carry on his enterprises at the expense of his ally. Alexander IV., who succeeded him, followed the same policy, and Henry was surprised to find himself on a sudden involved in an immense debt, which he had never been consulted in contracting. The sum already amounted to 135,541 marks, beside interest. . . . .

"The vanity and ambition of the Earl of Cornwall at last prevailed over his prudence and his avarice. . . . . He went over to Germany, and carried out of the kingdom no less a sum than seven thousand marks; he succeeded so far as to be chosen King of the Romans."—*Vide* Hume, Reign of Henry III.

in 1254, at the early age of twenty-six, leaving one son, Conradin, an infant, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Otto, Duke of Bavaria. Manfred assumed the reins of government for his young nephew. In 1254, Innocent IV. died. He was succeeded by Pope Alexander IV., a man who had neither the ambition nor the talents of his predecessor. Manfred soon cleared Sicily of his enemies, and in 1258, on the reported death of Conradin, he was declared King of Sicily, and crowned on the 11th of August of that year. Shortly after his coronation emissaries arrived, announcing the safety of Conradin, and calling upon Manfred to resign his usurped power. This Manfred refused to comply with; but notified his willingness to regard Conradin as heir presumptive.

Pope Alexander IV. died on the 25th of May, 1261. His successor, Urban IV., a Frenchman, proved a more powerful antagonist to Manfred. He employed every means to induce James, King of Arragon, to refuse his sanction to the marriage of his son with Constance, Manfred's daughter. The marriage, however, took place, thus giving to the House of Arragon an hereditary claim to the crown of Sicily. He then preached a crusade against him, and offered the

crown of Sicily to Charles of Anjou, brother of St. Louis, of France, an offer which had previously been made by Innocent IV. Charles feared the indirect claims of England, Henry III. having, on the refusal of Richard, Duke of Cornwall, accepted the Sicilian crown for his son, Edmond. To obviate this scruple, Urban sent an ambassador to England, who succeeded in procuring a resignation of all claims on Sicily from the English monarch.

Charles of Anjou made his own conditions. Urban consented to bestow upon him the kingdom of Sicily and Apulia, with the exception of the city and domains of Benevento, claiming moreover an annual tribute of eleven thousand ounces of gold. In 1264, Charles of Anjou, then in his forty-sixth year, made preparations for invading Italy. As a "fils de France," he was Count of Anjou, and in right of his wife, Beatrix, fourth daughter of Raimond-Bérenger, last Count of Provence, he was sovereign of that county. Beatrix was an ambitious woman; her three sisters were married to kings,—a King of France, a King of England, and a King of Germany; and old Bérenger, having thus well provided for the three eldest, had given his county in dower to Beatrix.

Provence was then the greatest fief of the crown of France, and Charles of Anjou ranked next in importance to the crowned heads of Europe. Beatrix was ambitious to be a queen, like her sisters; and for that purpose she sold all her jewels to provide men for the invasion of Italy.

The first body of adventurers entered that country under Robert, Count of Flanders, a son-in-law of Charles, and received the Pope's blessing at Viterbo.

Meanwhile Manfred was not idle, but collected a formidable army. Whilst these warlike preparations were making, Urban IV. died; he was succeeded by another Frenchman, Clement IV., who brought matters to a crisis. Charles had assembled an army of five thousand horse, fifteen thousand foot, and ten thousand crossbowmen; this force was commanded by Robert de Bethunes, son of the Count of Flanders, and Guy de Montfort, son of the Earl of Leicester. The gallant Beatrix donned armour for the sake of a diadem. Charles embarked with a thousand knights at Marseilles, and had a narrow escape from shipwreck. On the 24th of May, 1265, he entered Rome amidst the acclamations of the people, taking up his quarters at the Lateran, an act for which he was reprimanded by Clement; he,

however, was discreet enough to remove at once. Four days afterwards he was solemnly crowned King of Sicily, in the Church of St. John of Lateran.[1]

Charles now resolved to take possession of his newly-acquired kingdom without delay, and advanced at once against Manfred, who had taken up a strong position near Benevento. Manfred entrusted the defence of the river Garigliano, near Ceperano, to his brother-in-law, the Count de Caserte, and placed a strong garrison in San Germano; commanding in person the main body of his army at Benevento. On the approach of the French, the Count de Caserte took to flight ignominiously; San Germano was taken by storm, and the garrison put to the sword after a fierce resistance.

The river Calare now alone separated the two armies; Manfred resolved to risk a battle.

[1] The conditions of his coronation are curious: The crown was to be hereditary in the male and female descendants of Charles of Anjou; but in default of issue, it was to devolve to the Church; the possession of the crown of Sicily being declared incompatible with that of the empire, or of Tuscany. He was to pay an annual tribute of eleven thousand ounces of gold to the Pope, and a white charger, and also to provide during three months of the year three hundred horsemen for the service of the Church. Benevento and its domains were to be made over to the Church, and all the ecclesiastical immunities of the clergy of Sicily maintained. Any descendant of Charles of Anjou who should fail to observe these conditions, was to forfeit all claim to the crown.

He divided his army into three bodies : the first, consisting of twelve hundred German horse, was commanded by Count Galvano ; the second, of one thousand horse, Tuscans, Lombards, and Germans, was under the orders of Count Lancia ; Manfred led the third division, consisting of fourteen hundred Apulian and Moorish horsemen. Charles, on the other hand, who was no less eager for the battle, divided his army into four brigades : the first, commanded by Guy de Montfort, and the Marêchal de Mirepoix, consisted of a thousand French lances ; the second, consisting of nine hundred knights, the flower of the chivalry of Provence, and his Roman auxiliaries, was commanded by Charles in person ; seven hundred knights from Flanders, Brabant, and Picardy, were led by Robert Count of Flanders, and Gilles le Brun, Lord High Constable of France ; the fourth brigade, under the orders of Count Guerra, consisted of four hundred Florentine emigrants.[1]

Long and sanguinary was the battle of Benevento.[2] Thrice were the French driven back, and Manfred, sanguine of success, ordered his reserve to charge ; but the Apulian barons

[1] Giovanni Villani, book vii., chap. vii.

[2] This battle took place on the 26th February, 1266.

turned their horses' heads and fled from the field. The confusion became general ; the gallant Manfred, with a few faithful knights, threw himself into the hottest of the mêlée, and fell valiantly fighting amidst a heap of slain.

Dante, in the Inferno, has stigmatised the cowardice of the Apulian barons :—

> "And those, the rest, whose bones are gathered yet
> At Ceperano, there where treachery
> Branded the Apulian name."—Cant. xxviii., v. 13.

So great was the slaughter, that even in Dante's time the bones of the slain were still to be seen gathered at Ceperano.

On the pretext that he was under the excommunication of the Church, Charles refused the rites of Christian burial to his slain enemy. He ordered the corpse of Manfred to be buried at the foot of the bridge of Benevento. Every soldier of the army threw a stone upon the grave. His bones were afterwards removed by the Archbishop of Cosenza, who had been sent by Clement IV. to invite Charles of Anjou to invade Sicily. They were conveyed, by his orders, outside the boundaries of the Church, and buried near the river Verde, on the borders of the Campagna.

One of the finest passages in the Purgatorio,

is that in which Dante meets the spirit of Manfred. He thus describes him :[1] —

"Comely and fair, and gentle of aspéct,
He seem'd, but on one brow a gash was mark'd."

Manfred, pointing to a deep wound in his breast, declares his name, and gives an account of his death :—

"I am Manfredi, grandson to the Queen,
Costanza :[2] whence I pray thee, when return'd
To my fair daughter go, the parent glad
Of Aragonia and Sicilia's pride ;
And of the truth inform her, if of me
Aught else be told. When by two mortal blows
My frame was shatter'd, I betook myself
Weeping to Him who of free will forgives.
My sins were horrible, but so wide arms
Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
All who turn to it. Had this text divine
Been of Cosenza's shepherd better scann'd,
Who then by Clement on my hunt was set,
Yet at the bridge's head my bones had lain,
Near Benevento, by the heavy mole
Protected ; but the rain now drenches them,
And the wind drives, out of the kingdom's bounds,
Far as the stream of Verde, where with lights
Extinguish'd, he removed them from their bed.
Yet by their curse, we are not so destroy'd,
But that the eternal love may turn, while Hope
Retains her verdant blossom.[3] True it is,

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[1] *Purg.* Canto iii., v. 106, *et seq.*

[2] Costanza, daughter of Ruggiero, king of Sicily, and wife of the Emperor, Henry IV., the father of Frederick II.

[3] These lines contain a bold attack upon the Church of Rome. They imply that the excommunication of the Pope is of no avail

That such one as in contumacy dies
Against the holy Church, though he repent,
Must wander thirty-fold for all the time
In his presumption past; if such decree
Be not by prayers of good men shorter made.
Look, therefore, if thou canst advance my bliss;
Revealing to my good Costanza,[1] how
Thou hast beheld me; and beside, the terms
Laid on me of that interdict; for here
By means of those below much profit comes."

This victory was decisive. The town of Benevento was sacked, and Charles of Anjou made his solemn entry into Naples with Queen Beatrix at his side.

Meanwhile, Conradin, the son of Conrad, had attained his sixteenth year: his mother, a woman of sound practical sense, had refused her sanction to a war against Manfred, who was so valiantly defending the kingdom her son was to inherit. On the death of Manfred, the Ghibellines rallied round the young prince.

Conradin inherited all the spirit of his ancestors, and eagerly awaited an occasion to earn his spurs in so worthy a cause. He assembled an army; many of the nobles of Germany flocking to his standard. Clement IV.

against the divine goodness, which is always ready to pardon the repentant sinner. These lines inculcate the divine doctrine of Love, Hope, and Charity.

[1] Daughter of Manfred, and wife of Peter, king of Arragon.

issued a bull of excommunication against him, which the young prince responded to by advancing on Rome. He entered that city without striking a blow. He then advanced into the kingdom of Naples, where, falling into an ambuscade, he was taken prisoner, and executed by the order of Charles, on the 26th of October, 1268,[1] with his ally the Duke of Austria, and other nobles. Before laying his head on the block, he threw his gauntlet into the crowd assembled to witness the execution. This gauntlet was sent to Peter of Arragon. The murder of Conradin was terribly avenged, by the massacre commonly known as "the Sicilian Vespers."[2]

Ample materials were thus provided for Dante's immortal poem by these events; and the political changes in the other states of Italy contributed their share. The "Divina Commedia" is, in one sense, an historical poem.

In Lombardy, the blood-thirsty tyrant, Ezzelino, was perpetrating acts of fiendish cruelty against his oppressed subjects: the republics of Genoa and Pisa were struggling for the mastery

[1] "Carlo venne in Italia, e per ammenda
Vittima fe di Conradino," &c., &c.—*Purg.* xx., v. 67.

[2] Tir. 1282.

of the sea, whilst the Mediterranean was tinged with the best blood of their citizens. The fate of Ugolino and his children is an episode of that war, and is recorded with a terse energy that is almost frightful, by the great Tuscan.

Ugolino, Count of Gherardesca, was a noble Pisan and a Guelph. With the assistance of the Archbishop, Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, he drove his nephew, Nino, who ruled in Pisa, out of the city, usurping his place. The Archbishop, envious, or instigated by some other base motive, entered into a plot with the patrician families, the Gualandi, Sismondi, and Lanfranchi, to overthrow the usurper. The people were incited to revolt. The palace of Ugolino was stormed, and he himself, with his two sons, Gaddo and Guccione, and his three nephews, Ugolino (surnamed "Il Brigata"), Arrigo, and Anselmuccio, were taken prisoners and incarcerated in a tower belonging to the Gualandi in the "sette vie." The keys of the tower were thrown into the Arno, and the unfortunate inmates of the prison were left to die of starvation. The tower in which Ugolino perished with his sons and nephews was ever after called the "Torre della Fame."

In the thirty-third canto of the Inferno,

Dante finds Ugolino gnawing the skull of Ruggieri; he addresses him, when Ugolino, wiping his mouth with the tangled hair hanging from the scalp of the Archbishop, relates his terrible story :—

"'Know, I was on earth
Count Ugolino, and the Archbishop he
Ruggieri. Why I neighbour him so close,
Now list. That through effect of his ill thoughts
In him my trust reposing, I was ta'en
And after murder'd, need is not I tell.
What therefore thou canst not of heard, that is,
How cruel was the murder, shalt thou hear,
And know if he have wrong'd me. A small grate
Within that mew, which for my sake the name
Of Famine bears, where others yet must pine,
Already through its opening, several moons
Had shown me, when I slept the evil sleep
That from the future tore the curtain off.
* * * * *
'When I awoke,
Before the dawn, amid their sleep I heard
My sons (for they were with me) weep and ask
For bread. Right cruel art thou, if no pang
Thou feel at thinking what my heart foretold;
And if not now, why are thy tears to flow?
Now had they waken'd, and the hour drew near
When they were wont to bring us food; the mind
Of each misgave him through his dream, and I
Heard, at its outlet underneath lock'd up
The horrible tower; whence, uttering not a word,
I look'd upon the visage of my sons.
I wept not. So all stone I felt within.
They wept: and one, my little Anselm, cried,
"Thou lookest so! Father, what ails thee?" Yet
I shed no tear, nor answered all that day,

Nor the next night, until another sun
Came out upon the world. When a faint beam
Had to our doleful prison made its way,
And in four countenances I descried
The image of my own, on either hand
Through agony I bit; and they, who thought
I did it through desire of feeding, rose
O' the sudden, and cried, "Father, we should grieve
Far less, if thou would'st eat of us: thou gav'st
These weeds of miserable flesh we wear;
And do thou strip them off from us again."
Then, not to make them sadder, I kept down
My spirit in stillness. That day and the next
We all were silent. Ah, obdurate Earth!
Why open'd'st not upon us? When we came
To the fourth day, then Gaddo at my feet
Outstretch'd did fling him, crying, "Hast no help
For me, my father?" There he died; and e'en
Plainly as thou see'st me, saw I the three
Fall one by one 'twixt the fifth day and sixth:
Whence I betook me, now grown blind, to grope
Over them all, and for three days aloud
Call'd on them who were dead. Then, fasting got
The mastery of grief.' Thus having spoke,
Once more upon the wretched skull his teeth
He fastened like a mastiff's 'gainst the bone,
Firm and unyielding." [1]

The story of Francesca di Rimini is the recital of another tragic episode of the times in which Dante lived. An additional interest is attached to it from the fact of Dante having during his

[1] I have seen the Teatro Re at Milan (1844) crowded to suffocation to hear Modena, the greatest tragic actor in Italy, recite these lines of Dante. The sobs of some of the spectators were painfully audible.

exile found an asylum in the mansion of the father of that unfortunate lady at Ravenna.

Francesca, daughter of Guido da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna and Cervia,[1] was given by her father in marriage to the Lord of Rimini, a brave man but deformed in person. His brother Paolo, who unhappily possessed those graces which the husband of Francesca wanted, engaged her affections. Taken in adultery, they were both put to death by the enraged husband.

In the fifth canto of the Inferno, Francesca (accompanied by her lover) thus tells her tale:

"The land where I was born sits by the seas,
Upon that shore to which the Pô descends,
With all his followers, in search of peace.
Love, which the gentle heart soon apprehends,
Seized him for the fair person which was ta'en
From me, and me even yet the mode offends.
Love, who to none beloved to love again
Remits, seized me with wish to please, so strong,
That as thou see'st, yet, yet it doth remain.
Love to one death conducted us along,
But Caina waits for him our life who ended."

Dante then says:

"Francesca, thy sad destinies
Have made me sorrow till the tears arise.
But tell me, in the season of sweet sighs,
By what and how thy love to passion rose,
So as his dim desires to recognise."

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[1] "There Polenta's eagle broods;
And in his broad circumference of plume
O'ershadows Cervia."—*Inferno*, Canto xxvii.

Francesca replies :

" 'The greatest of all woes
Is to remind us of our happy days
In misery, and that thy teacher knows.
But if to learn our passion's first root, preys
Upon thy spirit with such sympathy,
I will do even as he who weeps and says:
We read one day for pastime, seated nigh,
Of Lancelot, how Love enchained him too.
We were alone, quite unsuspiciously;
But oft our eyes met, and our cheeks in hue
All o'er discoloured by that reading were;
But one point only wholly us o'erthrew;
When we read the long-sighed-for smile of her,
He, who from me can be divided never,
Kiss'd my mouth, trembling in the act all over.
Accursed was the book, and he who wrote.
That day no further leaf we did uncover.'
While thus one spirit told us of their lot,
The other wept, so that with pity's thralls
I swoon'd, as if by death I had been smote,
And fell down, even as a dead body falls.[1]"

In the midst of the civil wars and family feuds

[1] Silvio Pellico has made this the subject of a tragedy, and Leigh Hunt of a poem, which as our readers are doubtless aware, contains passages of great poetical beauty.

One of the happiest drawings of Ary Scheffer depicts this tragical story :—

" The whole history of woman's love (says Macaulay) is as highly and completely wrought, we think, in these few lines, as that of Juliet in the whole tragedy of Shakespeare. Francesca imputes the passion her brother-in-law conceived for her, not to depravity, but nobleness of heart in him, and to her own loveliness. With a mingled feeling of keen sorrow and complacent *naïveté,* she says she was fair, and that an ignominious death robbed him of her beauty.

which distracted the rest of Italy, Florence was laying the foundation of a popular form of government under which the Arts and Sciences were destined to flourish. It was at this period that the Visconti, who act so important a part in the history of Italy, rose to distinction. The Lords of Montferrat had gradually acquired great power and influence. William of Montferrat (surnamed Longsword) attempted to seize Milan from the Visconti. He was made prisoner

She confesses that she loved because she was beloved,—that charm had deluded her, and she declares, with transport, that joy had not abandoned her even in hell.

'Piacer si forte,
Che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.'

"It is thus that Dante unites perspicuity with conciseness, and the most naked simplicity with the profoundest observation of the heart. Her guilty passion survives its punishment by Heaven—but without a shade of impiety. How striking is the contrast of her extreme happiness in the midst of torments that can never cease, when, resuming her narrative, she looks at her lover, and repeats with enthusiasm:

'Questi, che mai da me non fia diviso.'

She nevertheless goes on to relieve her brother-in-law from all imputation of having seduced her. Alone, and unconscious of their danger, they read a love story together. They gazed upon each other, pale with emotion; but the secret of their mutual passion never escaped their lips:

'Per piu fiate gli occhi ci sospinse
Quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
Ma solo un punto fu qual che ci vinse.'

"The description of two happy lovers in the story was the ruin of

by the Archbishop of Milan, who confined him in an iron cage, where he died after two years' imprisonment (in 1290). The rise of the Visconti dates from that event.[1]

Dante was born at Florence in the month of March, 1265, and was the son of Alighiero degli Alighieri and Bella. His real name was Durante, abbreviated into Dante. His lineage was noble, his ancestors having been descended from Cacciaguida, who had a son called Alighiero or Aligiero, a name he took from his mother, who was a descendant from the Aldighieri of Ferrara. The children of Cacciaguida adopted the name of Alighieri.

Dante was quite a child when his father died,

Francesca. It was the romance of Launcelot and Ginevra, wife of Arthur, king of England:

"Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
Esser baciato da cotanto amante,
Questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante."

"After this avowal, she hastens to complete the picture with one touch, which covers her with confusion:

"Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante."

"She utters not another word! and yet we fancy her before us, with her downcast and glowing looks; whilst her lover stands by her side, listening in silence and in tears. Dante, too, who has hitherto questioned her, no longer ventures to inquire in what manner her husband had put her to death, but is so overawed by pity, that he sinks into a swoon."

[1] Vide *Purgatorio*, Canto vii., v. 133.

but his education was carefully attended to. Brunetto Latini,[1] as we have already told, was his preceptor in philosophy and the classics. He was also instructed in the elegant accomplishments of music and drawing.

The first poetical effusions of Dante were in honour of Bice, or Beatrix, the young daughter of Folco Portinari. This lady made a deep impression upon his heart. We find her name repeated and fondly cherished throughout all his works. Boccacio, who was a contemporary of Dante, and whose testimony is beyond question, gives the following beautiful description of Beatrice and Dante's first meeting :—

"It was at that season of the year when the mildness of the heavens decks the earth in all its graces, making it smile beneath their canopy in a rich garment of verdant foliage and variegated flowers, that Dante first beheld Beatrice. It was on the first of May when, according to annual custom, Folco Portinari, a man held high in the esteem of his fellow-citizens, had assembled his friends around him, accompanied by their children. Dante, who was only nine years of age, was among the juvenile guests. Amidst this gay little company was Folco's daughter,

[1] *Vide* preceding chapter, p. 32.

whose name was Bice (a diminutive of Beatrix). She had scarcely reached her eighth year, and was a graceful child of gentle and engaging manners. Her features wore an expression of soft beauty, and her words denoted more depth of thought than her years would have implied. So graceful and so lovely was this child, so honest her countenance, that many regarded her as an angel. This maiden then, such as I have described her—or rather more beautiful than any description of mine could make her—was present at this festival. Boy that he was, so deeply and so suddenly was her image engraven upon the young heart of Dante, that, from that day until life left him it was not obliterated. How this should be, no one can say. Was it a mysterious link of sympathy between two souls, or the special influence of Heaven; or was it, as experience sometimes shows us, that in the midst of the harmony of music and the rejoicings of a festival, their young hearts warmed and expanded towards each other? It matters not; but Dante at that tender age became the devoted slave of Love. As he advanced in years the flame burnt brighter; so much so, that nought gave him pleasure or comfort, save to be near her, to behold her beloved features and drink

consolation from her eyes. Everything in this world is transitory. Scarcely had she completed her four-and-twentieth year, when the fair Beatrice died. It pleased the Almighty to take her from this world of sorrow to that seat of glory prepared for her virtues. At this her departure, Dante felt so much grief, such poignant affliction—so many and such bitter tears did he shed—that his friends thought that death alone would stop them, as nothing could console him. Day or night, night or day, was as one to him—both were passed in sighs and tears : his eyes resembled two gushing fountains of living waters."[1]

Beatrice died on the 9th of June, 1290, as is recorded by Dante himself[2] in one of his poems. The poet has raised an everlasting monument to her in his "Divina Commedia." He thus describes her in the thirtieth canto of the Paradise :

"If all that hitherto is told of her,
Were in one praise concluded, 'twere too weak
To furnish out this turn. Mine eyes did look
On beauty, such as, I believe in sooth,
Not merely to exceed our human, but,
That save its Maker, none can to the full

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[1] Boccacio.—*Vita di Dante.*

[2] This date would make Beatrice twenty-six when she died.

Enjoy it. At this point o'erpower'd I fail,
Unequal to my theme, as never bard
Of buskin or of sock hath fail'd before.
For as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,
E'en so remembrance of that witching smile
Hath dispossest my spirit of itself.
Not from that day, when on this earth I first
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,
Have I with song applausive ever ceased
To follow; but now follow them no more;
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,
When it doth touch the limit of his skill."[1]

Some of Dante's commentators have endeavoured to question the existence of the fair Beatrice as a creature of flesh and blood, beholding only religion or theology under the symbolical figure of a beautiful woman. But they have forgotten in their wisdom that the heart of man ever fondly dwells upon and returns with longing to the affections of his youth, and clings with passionate perseverance to the name of a beloved object. The hidden springs of the actions of man must be sought in his passions and affections.

Neither his love for Beatrice, nor the ardent pursuit of his studies, prevented Dante from fulfilling the first duty of a citizen. He served his country in a cavalry regiment at the battle of Campaldino, between the Florentines and the

[1] *Paradiso*, Canto xxx., v. 17, *et seq.*

inhabitants of Arezzo, and, in the following year (1290), he took the field against the Pisans.

Some time after the death of Beatrice, Dante was induced by his friends to marry. He espoused Gemma dei Donati, a lady who, if we are to credit Boccacio, proved a second Xantippe, and completely dissipated any dreams of domestic bliss that may have visited him. He had six children by this marriage—five sons, and one daughter who was called Beatrice,[1] after his first love. This daughter took the veil at the Convent delle Uliva, at Ravenna. Three of his sons died young. Pietro, the eldest, acquired some reputation as a lawyer, and wrote, as also did the second son, Jacopo, a commentary on the "Divina Commedia."

A mind like Dante's was sure to be aroused into action amidst political convulsions. His opinion on public affairs was eagerly sought for by his fellow-citizens in all matters of difficulty or importance.[2]

In his thirty-fifth year (1300), Dante was elected one of the Priors of Florence, a dignity

[1] This circumstance causes us to doubt whether the lady was quite so bad as she is represented to have been.

[2] According to some of his biographers, he was sent no less than fourteen times as Ambassador to the courts of Princes.

equivalent to that of Minister of State. This elevation ultimately proved the source of all his misfortunes.

Florence was at this time the scene of nightly brawls, arising from a feud between two powerful families—the Donati and the Cerchi. Additional fuel was given to the flames of discord by the arrival of the partisans of the Neri and Bianchi of Pistoja, who came to Florence to submit the adjustment of their dispute to the arbitration of the Senate. The Bianchi took part with the Cerchi, whilst the Neri espoused the cause of the Donati. At a secret meeting held by the Neri, in the Church of the Trinity, it was resolved to solicit the Pope (Boniface VIII.) to invite Charles of Valois, brother of Philip-le-Bel, King of France, to march on Florence, that he might put an end to these disorders and reform the state. This step justly exasperated the Bianchi, who, with drawn swords, waited upon the Priors, and accused their opponents of having secretly conspired against the liberty of the state. Meanwhile, the Neri beat to arms, the whole city was in an uproar, and a sanguinary affray was imminent.

In this state of things, Dante was called upon for his advice, and on this occasion he gave

proofs of a firmness and prudence becoming a magistrate. He counselled his colleagues to exile the leaders of both factions, which was accordingly done ; the Neri being banished beyond the Piave, near Perugia—the Bianchi to Sarzana. The latter were ultimately allowed to return to Florence, whereupon the Neri accused Dante of partiality. The final result of these discords was the entrance of Charles of Valois into Florence. Pope Boniface, fearing lest the Bianchi, who numbered many Ghibellines in their ranks, should prevail, and the Neri, who were Guelphs almost to a man, be excluded from all participation in the government, induced Charles of Valois to march on the capital. Charles entered Florence at the head of an army ; but instead of adjusting the disputes of the two factions, he took possession of the city on his own account. He disarmed the Bianchi and allowed the Neri to return, who entered in triumph, sacked the houses of their opponents, and threw open the prisons.

Dante was the chief object of their rage. He was absent at the time on a mission to the Pope, to solicit his interference in effecting an amicable settlement of their quarrels. Whilst thus engaged in the service of his country, a proclamation

was issued at Florence (on the 27th of January, 1302), condemning him to a fine of eight thousand livres and two years' exile, and, in default of payment of the fine, a confiscation of his property, which was seized. In the March of the following year, a decree was issued condemning Dante and fifteen other Florentines to be burnt at the stake.[1]

The feelings of Dante, when intelligence of these events reached him at Rome, may be more easily imagined than described. He immediately turned his back upon the gates of the Holy City, highly incensed against the Pope, whom he suspected of having kept him by false promises on the banks of the Tiber, whilst he was concerting his ruin on the shores of the Arno. He made at once for Sienna, where, on learning the full extent of his misfortune, he joined the Bianchi at Arezzo, and was received with open arms by their leader, Bossone of Gubbio.

The Bianchi made an attempt to enter Florence by force of arms, and actually took possession of one of the gates, but were finally driven back. Dante, who, there is good reason

[1] Tiraboschi publishes a copy of the sentence. It is in Latin. *Vide* Tirab., *St. della Lett. Ital.*, vol. v., p. 418.

to believe, took part in that expedition, must have now relinquished all hopes of returning to his country.

The poet has not failed to enumerate all these events in his great work, which, as I have already observed, is in a great measure a history of the century in which he lived. Thus, in the sixth canto of the Inferno, he questions the departed spirit of a fellow-citizen respecting Florence.

"Tell me, if thou know'st,
What shall at length befal the citizens
Of the divided city?"

The spirit replies :

"After long striving they will come
To blood; and the wild party from the woods [1]
Will chase the other [2] with much injury forth.
Then it behoves that this [3] must fall, within
Three solar circles, and the other rise
By borrow'd force of one, who under shore
Now rests.[4] It shall a long space hold aloof
Its forehead, keeping under heavy weight
The other opprest, indignant at the load,
And grieving sore."

On Charles of Valois, we find the following bitter lines in the twentieth canto of the Purgatory :—

[1] The Cerchi, who came from the wooded country of the Val di Nievale.

[2] The Neri. [3] The Bianchi. [4] Charles of Valois.

"I see the time at hand,
That forth from France invites another Charles
To make himself and kindred better known.
Unarm'd he issues, saving with that lance,
Which the Arch-traitor tilted with;[1] and that
He carries with so home a thrust, as rives
The bowels of poor Florence."

Nor does Pope Boniface fare better. In the nineteenth canto of the Inferno, Dante and Virgil enter the third circle of hell, the appointed place for those convicted of simony. Here they find Pope Nicholas III., who, mistaking Dante for Boniface, whose arrival had been predicted to him at a later period, exclaims :—

"Ha! already standest there?
Already standest there, O Boniface!
By many a year the writing played me false.
So early dost thou surfeit with the wealth,
For which thou fearedst not in guile to take
The lovely lady,[2] and then mangle her?"

And in the twenty-seventh canto of the Paradise, St. Peter is thus made angrily to rebuke him :—

"My place
He who usurps on earth, (my place, ay, mine,
Which in the presence of the son of God
Is void,) the same has made my cemetery[3]
A common sewer of puddle and of blood:
The more below his[4] triumph, who from hence
Malignant fell."

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[1] "Con la qual giostrò Giuda" (Judas Iscariot).
[2] The Church of Rome. [3] Rome. [4] Satan.

In the twentieth canto of the Purgatory his death is alluded to :—

> "To hide with direr guilt
> Past ill and future, lo ! the flower-de-luce
> Enters Alagna ; in his Vicar Christ
> Himself a captive, and his mockery
> Acted again."

The death of Boniface VIII. is curious, as fulfilling the prophecy that he should enter on the Popedom like a fox, reign like a lion, and die like a dog. A mortal enemy of the Colonna, the most powerful family in Rome, he was never weary of persecuting them. Having quarrelled with Philip IV. of France, the Colonna took advantage of that circumstance to urge the French monarch to come to their aid. On the 12th March, 1303, Guillaume de Nogaret, a French nobleman, presented a request to the king in the presence of the princes of the blood, and the assembled clergy, accusing Boniface of simony, heresy, sorcery, and other crimes, and demanding the convocation of a council-general to deliver the Church from its oppressor.

Boniface immediately convoked an assembly of the French clergy in Rome, "to reform the abuses introduced by kings into the civil and ecclesiastical administration of their kingdoms." He issued a bull of excommunication against

Philip, though he sent, at the same time, a Legate to the court of France with full powers to give him absolution, should he acknowledge his errors. Philip, however, resolved upon taking a vengeance such as no prince before or after has ever dared to take upon a Pope. One morning the self-same Guillaume de Nogaret, accompanied by Sciarra Colonna and other personal enemies of the Pope, with three hundred troopers, entered the little town of Agnani, where Boniface was staying, and forced their way into his presence. The venerable aspect of the old man, then eighty-six years of age, who advanced undaunted to meet them in his pontifical robes, saved his life; but they made him prisoner. Allowing their retainers to resort to pillage and license, they were finally driven out by the citizens, headed by Cardinal Fieschi.

Boniface regained his liberty, after remaining three days a prisoner. The old man was so affected by his captivity, that it went nigh to deprive him of his senses. He returned to Rome, and placed himself under the protection of the Orsini, the natural enemies of the Colonna. The two cardinals Orsini, having one day prevented his appearance in public, his rage knew

no bounds, and he foamed at the mouth. Refusing all food, he locked himself up in his apartment. On the doors being forced, he was found dead on his bed, the clothes being drawn partially over his face. He still held in his hand a piece of wood, which he had gnawed with his teeth. His white hair was bespattered with blood, for, in a fit of insanity, he had dashed his head against the wall.[1]

In 1306, we find Dante residing at Padua, a guest of the Marquis Malaspina, in the Lunigiana; subsequently with his friend, Bossone, at Gubbio; and finally in Verona, at the court of the Scaligieri. An allusion to his residence at this court has been found in the words, placed by Dante in the mouth of his ancestor, Cacciaguida, in the seventeenth canto of the Paradise. Cacciaguida predicts his exile :—

"Such as driven out
From Athens, by his cruel step-dame's wiles,
Hippolytus departed; such must thou
Depart from Florence. This they wish, and this
Contrive, and will ere long effectuate, there,
Where gainful merchandise is made of Christ
Throughout the livelong day."[2] . . . .
First refuge thou must find, first place of rest,
In the great Lombard's courtesy, who bears

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[1] For a detailed account of his death, *vide* Sismondi, *Rep. Ital.* Vol. iii. chap. xxiv.

[2] Rome.

Upon the ladder perch'd, the sacred bird.[1]
He shall behold thee, with such kind regard,
That 'twixt ye two, the contrary to that
Which 'fals 'twixt other men, the granting shall
Forerun the asking."

Notwithstanding his hospitable welcome, his proud spirit revolted at the idea of being constrained to live upon another's bounty: he felt how hard is—

"Lo scendere e 'l salir per altrui scale."[2]

From Verona the poet proceeded to other cities of Italy; he visited Paris, and, according to Boccacio, crossed the Channel, and pursued a course of studies at Oxford.[3]

The precise date when Dante commenced his poem has not been satisfactorily ascertained.

Some commentators take the opening verses of the Inferno—

"In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood astray,"

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[1] The crest of the Lords of La Scala is an Eagle perched upon a ladder.

[2] "How hard the passage, to descend and climb
By other's stairs."—*Paradiso,* Cant. xvii., v. 59.

[3] "Dante se in juventute dedit omnibus artibus liberalibus, studens eas Paduæ, Bononiæ, demum Oxoniis et Parisiis, ubi fecit multos actus mirabiles, in tantum quod ab aliquibus dicebatur magnus theologus ab aliquibus magnus poeta."

to indicate that he was in his thirty-fifth year, and that the poet denoted that age as the middle of a man's life. However this may be, many cities claim the honour of his great work having been commenced within their walls. It would appear that Dante commenced his poem before his exile, and terminated it before the death of the Emperor Henry VII., in 1313, otherwise he would not have prepared a throne for that monarch in "Paradise :"—

"In that proud stall
On which, the crown, already o'er its state
Suspended, holds thine eyes—or e'er thyself
Mayst at the wedding sup,—shall rest the soul
Of the great Harry, he who, by the world
Augustus hail'd, to Italy must come,
Before her day be ripe."[1]

Rudolph of Hapsburg, was elected Emperor of Germany in 1273. He was succeeded by Adolph of Nassau, in 1291, who fell in battle fighting against Albert of Austria, in 1298.[2] Albert was assassinated by John of Suabia, his nephew, and was succeeded by the Emperor Henry VII., of Luxemburg, in 1308,—the "great Harry" mentioned so often by Dante.

Our poet waited personally upon Henry to

[1] *Paradise*, Canto xxx., v. 131, *et seq.*

[2] It was the tyranny of this Albert that caused the revolt of the Swiss under William Tell.

induce him to invade Italy, and indited letters to all the powerful princes of Italy, exhorting them to receive the emperor with open arms as their deliverer. His hopes were doomed to be short-lived. The emperor, whose arrival in Italy had given rise to the most sanguine expectations, was taken ill, and died—some say, poisoned—in August, 1313, at Buonconvento, near Sienna, after having uttered an empty threat against Florence.

Deceived in his most cherished hopes, the poet recommenced his wanderings, making Verona, however, his head-quarters. In the year 1320, he delivered a lecture at that city on the two elements—Fire and Water.

At Ravenna he was received with open arms by Guido Novello da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna, who, says Boccacio, "knowing how difficult it is for noble minds to beg," himself anticipated all the wishes of his guest. Guido was a poet of some eminence, and the father of the beautiful and unfortunate Francesca di Rimini.

As a mark of the high esteem the Lord of Ravenna entertained for his guest, it may be mentioned that, being at war with Venice, he sent Dante as his ambassador to that city to treat for peace. But fate seemed to have decreed

that each new honour was to be the forerunner of a calamity. His misfortunes commenced with his election to the dignity of Prior of Florence; his embassy to Rome was the most disastrous epoch in his life; and his mission to Venice terminated in his death; for having failed in obtaining an audience of the Senate of that city, he returned to Ravenna disappointed and heart-broken. He died very shortly afterwards.

Giovanni Villani, the celebrated Florentine historian, records his death in these words:—"In the year 1321, in the month of September, on the day of Santa Croce, died the great and valiant poet Dante Alighieri, of Florence, in the city of Ravenna in the Romagna, after his return from an embassy to Venice, in the service of the Lord of Ravenna, with whom he was staying."

Dante was fifty-six years of age when he died.

Guido Novella da Polenta testified the esteem he felt for his departed friend, by ordering the most sumptuous obsequies. The coffin containing the mortal remains of the great Tuscan, was borne to the porch of the church of the St. Franciscans on the shoulders of the most distinguished citizens of Ravenna. Guido ordered

a splendid monument to be erected to his memory, which death prevented him from seeing completed. The original design was carried out in the year 1483, by Bernardo Bembo (father of the Cardinal), and who was prætor of Ravenna. This monument bears various inscriptions, and the following Latin epitaph :—

"Exigua tumuli, Dantes, hic sorte jacebas
Squalenti nulli cognite pene situ ;
At nunc marmoreo subnixus conderis arcu
Omnibus et cultu splendidiore nites.
Nimirum Bembus Musis incensus Etruscis,
Hoc tibi, quem imprimis, hæ coluere, dedit."

The tomb was restored by Cardinal Corsi in 1692, and replaced by a more magnificent mausoleum in 1780, which was constructed at the expense of Cardinal Luigi Valenti Gonzaga. In vain have the Florentines, at different periods, endeavoured to recover the bones of their illustrious fellow-citizen, whom they knew not how to honour in his lifetime. Ravenna still retains, and is resolved to keep, the ashes of her guest,

"Whilst Florence vainly begs her banish'd dead and weeps."

Dante was of the middle stature, and of a grave and majestic deportment. His impressive and prominent features have been handed down

to posterity on bronzes and medals. A bold aquiline nose, high cheek bones, with a somewhat protruding underlip, thick black curling hair and beard, with a pensive cast of countenance, complete the portrait of Italy's greatest poet, whose writings are considered more at length in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, we cannot, we think, conclude the present more fitly than by quoting two sonnets by the Dante of painting and sculpture, in praise of his immortal countryman. Thus sings Michael-Angelo Buonarotti.[1]

"He from the world into the blind abyss
Descended, and beheld the realms of woe;
Then to the seat of everlasting bliss
And God's own throne, led by his thought sublime,
Alive he soar'd, and to our nether clime
Bringing a steady light, to us below
Reveal'd the secrets of Eternity.
Ill did his thoughtless countrymen repay
The fine desire: that which the good and just
So often from the insensate many meet;
That evil guerdon did our Dante find.
But gladly would I, to be such as he,
For his sad exile and calamity,
Forego the happiest fortunes of mankind.

How shall we speak of him, for our blind eyes
Are all unequal to his dazzling rays?
Easier it is to blame his enemies,
Than for the tongue to tell his lightest praise.

---

[1] Translation by Duppa. *Vide* his Life of Michael Angelo.

For as did he explore the realms of woe,
And at his coming did high heaven expand
Her lofty gates, to whom his native land
Refused to open hers. Yet shalt thou know,
Ungrateful city, in thine own despite,
That thou hast foster'd but thy Dante's fame;
For virtue when oppress'd appears more bright,
And brighter therefore shall his glory be,
Suffering of all mankind most wrongfully,
Since in the world there lives no greater name.

CHAPTER III.

Review of Dante's works.—The Vita Nuova.—Dante's Dream.—The Convito.—His Latin treatise 'de Monarchia.'—Libri della Volgare eloquenza.—Miscellaneous writings.—His letters.—The Divina Commedia.—Its origin.—Dante and Homer compared.—Political bearing of the poem.—Its moral or æsthetical sense.—Its artistic structure.—Its unity.—The Inferno.—Purgatory—Paradise.—The poem explained.—Sensation created in Italy on its first appearance.—It is publicly expounded at Florence, Bologna, and Pisa.—Dante's commentators.—English translators.

THE "Divina Commedia" is the poem upon which the literary fame of Dante chiefly rests. Before entering into an examination of that masterpiece, it is advisable to take a passing glance at his earlier productions.

Undoubtedly, the first inspirations of his genius were fanned by his love for the daughter of Folco Portinari.

The "Vita Nuova" is the history of his youthful love for Beatrice. It was written when Dante was in his four-and-twentieth year. The language is tinged with a shade of sentimental melancholy which aptly portrays the feelings of the poet. It is a short narrative in prose, serving chiefly as an introduction to, and a

comment on, the poems with which it is interspersed. "In that part of the volume of my memory," (he says,) "before which there is little that could be read, stands a rubric, which says, 'Incipit Vita Nuova.' Under that rubric I find the incidents recorded, which it is my intention to string together in the following book." [1]

Each sonnet is preceded by a short introduction in prose, informing the reader how the poem he is about to read originated. Thus, he tells us, that, riding along mournfully one day, thinking upon his lady, he meets Love upon the road (his *dolorissimo signore*), with whom he had the imaginary conversation he has thrown into the shape of a sonnet.

"Pacing my steed along the road one day,
The irksome journey saddening all my thoughts,
I Love encountered, on my very path,
Clad in a pilgrim's habit, coarse and light.
He seem'd dejected and disconsolate,
As if his sovereignty had been o'erthrown;
And sighing pensively, came slowly on,
With eyes cast down, to avoid the sight of man.
Soon as he saw me, calling me by name,
He said, 'I have journeyed from a distant land,

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[1] "In quella parte de llibro della mia memoria dinanzi alla quale poco si potrebbe leggere si truova una rubrica, la quale dice: 'Incipit vita nuova.' Sotto la qual rubrica io trovo scritte le parole, le quali è mio intendimento d'assemplare in questo libro, e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenzia."

Where, by my will, thy heart of late reposed,
And bear it here, to serve anew my pleasure.'
I then seemed so identified with Love,
He vanished, and I knew not how nor where."

The beautiful sonnet upon the death of Beatrice, commencing—

"Donna pietosa, e di novella etade," &c.

is thus commended to the attention of the reader in the "Vita Nuova:"

"Suffering from a severe attack of illness, confined to a bed of sickness, so weak that I could scarcely move a limb,—on the ninth day, my sufferings being almost intolerable, my thoughts turned to my lady. And while thus occupied with her idea, they fell to this consideration—how slender is the thread of life! I felt how fragile it is, and although my reason was not affected, I began to weep internally at so much misery, and drawing a deep sigh, I said to myself, 'It is but too true that some day the most gentle Beatrice must die.' And this idea gave me so much pain that I closed my eyes, and my imagination began to wander. I fancied I beheld the faces of women with dishevelled hair, who said to me, 'Thou also must die.' Other faces then appeared, ghastly and horrible to behold, and they exclaimed, 'Thou

art dead!' And thus my brain wandered, and I knew not where I was; and I fancied I beheld other female figures flitting past me, their long locks streaming in the wind, weeping, and wonderfully sad; and methought that the sun grew dark, that the stars appeared of a colour that made me suppose they were weeping, and that there were mighty earthquakes. And greatly marvelling at all I beheld, and much stricken with fear, I thought a friend came and said to me, 'Knowest thou not that thy admirable lady has left this earth?' Then I began to weep bitterly, and it was not only in imagination that I wept, but I wept veritable tears with my eyes. I fancied I cast my looks toward Heaven, and there I beheld a host of angels ascending, bearing before them a snow-white cloud, singing glorious hymns of rejoicing, Hosanna to the Most High. Then I felt that my heart, which was overflowing with love, said to me, 'It is true that our dear lady is dead.' I then, it seemed, arose to behold the body that had contained so noble and so beautiful a soul. And so powerful was my wandering imagination, that I beheld the inanimate corpse, a white veil having been thrown over her features. There was such an expression of sweet humility and repose upon

her countenance, that it seemed to say, 'I am about to enter the realms of peace.' Such then became my desire to accompany her, that I invoked death, and exclaimed, 'Most kind Death, come to me, and be not unkind, for thou must needs be gentle, having been in such company. Come then to me; for much do I desire thee. See'st thou not that I already bear thy colours?' And when I had seen all the sad rites performed which are paid unto the dead, I found myself again in my chamber, where I fancied I looked towards Heaven; and so strong was my imagination, that shedding tears, I exclaimed aloud with my own natural voice, 'O, beautiful spirit, how happy is he who beholds thee.' And as I said this with an expression of deep anguish, and invoked death, a gentle girl, who was standing at my bedside, thinking that I wept on account of the bodily pain I was suffering, began to weep from pity; other women, who were attending me as nurses, thinking that her lamentations had caused me to weep, told her—who was nearly allied to me by blood—to leave me, and came to awake me, perceiving that I was dreaming: 'Awake,' they said, 'and be comforted.' In the act of exclaiming, 'O, Beatrice, blessed art thou,' I awoke. I opened my eyes,

and found it was a dream, but I still called upon Beatrice, though my voice was so broken with sobs that I do not think the women understood me. They endeavoured to comfort me by kind words, and asked what ailed me. And being somewhat comforted, I became aware of my evil dream, and replied to them, 'I will tell you what has happened to me.' From the beginning to the end I related what I had seen, concealing, however, the name of the most gentle lady. Recovered from my illness, it appeared to me worthy of being recorded, and I put it into verse as follows :—

"'A lady young, compassionate, and fair,
Richly adorn'd with every human grace,
Watch'd o'er my couch, where oft I call'd on Death;
And noticing mine eyes with sorrow swollen,
And listening to the folly of my words,
Fear seized upon her and she wept aloud.
Attracted by her moaning, other dames
Gave heed unto my pitiable state,
And from my view removed her.
They then approached, to rouse me by their voice,
And one cried "Sleep no more!"
And one, "Why thus discomfort thee?"
With that the strange delirious fancy fled,
And calling on my lady's name, I woke.
So indistinct and mournful was my voice,
By anguish interrupted so, and tears,
That I alone the name heard in my heart:
Then with a countenance abashed,—through shame
Which to my face had mounted visibly—

Prompted by Love, I turned towards my friends,
And features showed so pale and wan,
It made beholders turn their thoughts on death.
"Alas! our comfort he must have,"
Said every one, with kind humility,
Then oft they questioned me,
"What hast thou seen, that has unmanned thee thus?"
And when I was in part restored, I said,
"Ladies, to you the vision I'll relate.
'Whilst I lay pondering on my ebbing life,
And saw how brief its tenure, and how frail,
Love wept within my heart, where he abides;
For my sad soul was wandering so, and lost,
That sighing deeply at the thought, it said,
Inevitable Death attends Madonna too.
Such consternation then my senses seized,
The eyes weighed down with fear were closed;
And scattered far and wide
The spirits fled, and each in error strayed.
And then imagination's powers
Of recollection and of truth bereft,
Showed me the fleeting forms of wretched dames,
Who shouted "Death!" still crying, "Thou shalt die."
Many the doubtful things which next I saw,
Wandering in vain imagination's maze;
I seemed to be I know not in what place.
And ladies loosely robed saw fleet along,
Some weeping, and some uttering loud laments
Which darted burning grief into the soul.
And then, methought, I saw a gradual veil
Obscure the sun; the star of Love appeared,
And sun and star seemed both to weep;
Birds flying through the dusky air dropp'd down;
Trembled the earth:
And then appeared a man, feeble and pale,
Who cried to me, "What, here? Heard'st the news?
Dead is thy lady, she who was so fair."
I raised the eyes then, moistened with my tears,

And softly as the shower of manna fell,
Angels I saw returning up to Heaven.
Before them was a slender cloud extended,
And from behind I heard them shout, "Hosanna.!"
What more was sung I know not, or would tell.
Then Love thus spoke: "Concealment here shall end;
Come now and see our lady who lies dead."
Imagination's fallacy
Then led me where in death Madonna lay.
And after I had gazed upon her form,
Ladies I saw conceal it with a veil;
And such true meekness from its features beamed,
It seemed to say to me, "I dwell in peace."
So meek in my affliction I became,
Seeing such meekness on her brow expressed,
That I exclaimed, "O Death, I hold thee sweet,
Noble and kind henceforth thou must be deemed,
Since thou hast been united to Madonna.
Piteous, not cruel, must thy nature be.
Behold! desire so strong to be enrolled
Thy follower, my faith and thine seem one.
Come, for the heart solicits thee!"
I then departed, all sad rites complete,
And when I found myself alone,
With eyes upraised to the realms above, I said,
"Blest is he beholds thee, beauteous soul!"
That instant through your kindness I awoke.'" [1]

The other poems in the "Vita Nuova" are much in the same style. After perusing them, the reader must be sceptical indeed who doubts the existence of Beatrice. In a later sonnet he exclaims :—

"So pleasing is her countenance, that he
Who gazes feels delight expand the heart,

[1] Charles Lyell's translation.

Which must be proved or cannot be conceived.
And from her lips there seems to emanate
A spirit full of mildness and of love,
Which, counselling the soul, still says, O sigh !"[1]

The sonnets after the death of Beatrice, or as Dante expresses himself, "after she had ascended to Heaven, and become a denizen of Eternal Life," are equally beautiful :—

"Sad notes of misery were my sole resource."

"When my eyes had wept so much," he says, "that from very weariness I found no longer vent for my grief, I endeavoured to relieve it by words. I penned the following ode :—

"'Forth from its lovely frame the soul is fled,
In favour as in excellence most high,
And sits in glory on a worthy throne.
He who can speak of her without a tear
A heart of stone must have, wicked and vile,
Where never spirit benign can entrance find.
The ignoble heart is fraught with sense too low
To form imagination faint of her ;
And hence desire to weep offends not him.
But sadness him assails, and sighs,
And tears of deadly sorrow, and his soul
Of every consolation is bereft,
Who, even in thought, has once beheld how good
And fair she was, and how from us she 's taken.
Anguish intolerable attends my sighs.
When to the mind returns the afflicting thought
Of the beloved who my heart hath shared.

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[1] "Tanto gentile," &c. *Vita Nuova.* Same translator.

> And often when I ruminate on death,
> A wish so soothing o'er my senses comes,
> The colour of my features it transforms.
> But when imagination holds me fast,
> Pain so severe oft seizes every nerve,
> That I am roused through very agony;
> And I such spectacle become,
> That from mankind I separate abash'd.
> Then solitary, weeping, I lament and call
> On Beatrice, and say, "Art thou then dead?"
> And while I call on her am comforted.'" [1]

The "Vita Nuova" concludes by Dante relating that he had a vision in which he beheld things which determined him never again to speak of his departed mistress, until he could do so in terms more worthy of her, trusting, after some years' study, to be enabled to write of her as mortal creature had never before been eulogised. This was, doubtless, in allusion to his great poem, the plan of which was already maturing in his mind, and in which Beatrice *has* been immortalised as never woman was before.

At a later age, and after his banishment, Dante commenced another work in prose, to which he gave the title of "Il Convito," or "the Banquet." The "Convito" consists of comments upon three odes. It contains many passages of great beauty, and gives proofs of deep study and scientific research. "The viands of this banquet,"

[1] *Vita Nuova.* Lyell's translation.

says Dante, "shall be served up in fourteen different ways—that is to say, fourteen Odes, of which Love and Virtue shall be the themes; which viands, without the bread" (his comments) "which I offer with them, would not be altogether free from a charge of obscurity, and would be prized by many, less for their usefulness than for their beauty: my comments shall be the light that will display their true meaning to all."

The length to which these comments were likely to extend, is probably one reason why Dante has only offered three instead of fourteen dishes to his guests, who assuredly would seek for aliment elsewhere, if compelled to eat so much bread, however palatable, to assist digestion. The tone of the "Convito" is temperate and manly, bearing a marked contrast to the fervid, and at times impassioned, language of the "Vita Nuova." Beatrice being dead, Dante informs the reader, that the mistress to whom his affections became ever afterwards devoted, is Philosophy. There are many passages in the "Convito," which may serve as a key to the plan of the "Divine Comedy:" in this respect the treatise is valuable, and ought to be studied by every admirer of that great poem. "Thus," he says, "writings should be viewed in four

different senses :—a literal sense, an allegorical sense, a moral sense, and a mystical (anagogical) sense." He then explains what is to be understood by those four senses or interpretations. By an allegorical sense I mean," he says, "when Truth is conveyed through the medium of Fable. Thus, when Ovid says that Orpheus charmed wild beasts, and made inanimate trees and rocks dance to the sound of his lyre, he meant to imply that the wise man by his reasoning could control and tame the wilder passions. Theologians interpret this sense differently ; but here I am speaking of poetry, and shall confine myself to stating how it is interpreted by poets. The moral sense consists in the reader deriving benefit from what he reads for himself. The anagogical [1] sense, is the spiritual interpretation of that which signifies the supreme objects of eternal glory."

This exposition will enable the student, in some measure, to fathom, or rather to apprehend the depth of thought, and to form some idea of the immensity of Dante's conceptions. A careful study of the three Odes in the "Convito," will greatly facilitate the reading of the "Divine Comedy."

When the Emperor, Henry VII., advanced into Italy, Dante appealed to all the princes and

[1] "Anagogico cio è sovra senso."

men of influence of his country, to give him a cordial welcome. On the 16th of April, 1311,[1] he addressed the Letter to the Emperor, published in most editions of his works, in which, comparing him to the heroes of old, he called upon him to enter as a liberator into Italy. To prepare the minds of the Italians favourably for his advent, he wrote a Latin treatise "de Monarchiâ." In this production Dante endeavours to prove:—1st. That the monarchical form of government is necessary for the happiness of mankind; 2nd. That the right of exercising universal monarchical power is invested in the Roman people; 3rd. That the authority of the sovereign emanates directly from God, and consequently is not subject to the temporal authority of the Church, whence he assigns limits to the power of the Pope.[2]

Many of the arguments which Dante brings forward in support of his proposition, are ingenious, and some are taken from holy writ. They coincide with the views maintained by Dr. Johnson, that monarchy becomes a necessity,[3]

[1] The emperor died in 1313.

[2] 1. De necessitate Monarchiæ. 2. Quomodo Romanus populus de jure sibi asciverit officium Monarchiæ, sive Imperii. 3. Qualiter officium Monarchiæ, sive Imperii, dependet a Deo immediatè.

[3] "The history of mankind," says Dr. Johnson, "informs us that a single power is very seldom broken by a confederacy. States of

though the conclusion is arrived at by a different road. This treatise gave great offence to the Pope and the Papal party. Cardinal Beltramo di Poggetto, the Pope's legate in Lombardy, ordered the book to be burnt, as containing heretical doctrines; and forbade any man to read it under pain of excommunication. Dante with difficulty escaped out of the Legations, otherwise he would, in all probability, have shared the fate of his treatise.[1]

Dante also wrote, in Latin, two books on the Italian dialect (*De Vulgari Eloquio*). An Italian translation of the work first appeared. It was not until the Latin original was printed at Paris,

different interests and aspects, malevolent to each other, may be united for a time by common distress, and in the ardour of self-preservation fall unanimously upon an enemy, by whom they are all equally endangered. But, if their first attack can be withstood, time will never fail to dissolve their union; success and miscarriage will be equally destructive; after the conquest of a province they will quarrel in the division; after the loss of a battle all will be endeavouring to secure themselves by abandoning the rest. From the impossibility of confining numbers to the constant and uniform prosecution of a common interest, arises the difficulty of securing subjects against the encroachment of governors. Power is always gradually stealing away from the many to the few, because the few are more vigilant and consistent; it still contracts to a smaller number, till in time it centres in a single person. Thus, all the forms of government instituted among mankind perpetually tend towards monarchy; and power, however diffused through the whole community, is by negligence or corruption, commotion or distress, reposed at last in the chief magistrate."

[1] Two noble Italians, Pino della Tosa, and Ostagio di Polenta, assisted Dante in his escape from the Legations. (Boccacio.)

in 1577, by Corbinelli, that the authorship was publicly made known. The translation is by Trissino.

The first book commences with the origin of all languages. After stating that the power of speech was given to man only, and the obvious reasons thereof, he argues, that although, in the Old Testament, Eve is made to speak first when tempted by the serpent, it was more reasonable to suppose, that Adam, being created first, was the first to speak. Having satisfied himself upon that point, the author proceeds to investigate what dialect was first spoken. He concludes, that simultaneously with the creation of the first soul, a form of language was given to man, which would still be spoken generally had it not been for the presumption of mankind. Adam spoke that language and all his descendants, until the building of the tower of Babel. This form of speech was inherited by the sons of Heber (after him called Hebrews), who alone retained it after the confusion of tongues, that our Saviour, who was to be born of their nation, might make use of the language of grace: the Hebrew tongue, therefore, was the first idiom spoken.[1] To put

[1] "Dicimus, igitur, certam formam locutionis a Deo cum animam primam concreatam fuisse, dico autem formam, et quantum ad

a stop to the impious building, a different tongue was given to each handicraft ; those who retained the sacred language were neither present, nor praised the work, but on the contrary, censured it and laughed to scorn the builders. They were the children of the tribe of Shem, the third son of Noah, from whom sprang the children of Israel, who spake the primeval language until their dispersion.

The subdivision of dialects throughout the world, more especially in Europe, is then discussed, with the changes they gradually underwent, with a more special reference to the formation of the Italian language. Dante pays a high tribute of praise to Frederick II. of Sicily, and his son Manfred, for their cultivation of it.[1] The second book is devoted to philosophical researches, respecting the different dialects of Italy, and enters into a philosophical consideration of the style and form of poetry best adapted to the "Vulgare Illustre" of Italy.

verum vocabula et quantum ad vocabularum constructionem, et quantum ad constructionis prolationem, qua quidem forma omnis lingua loquentium uteretur, nisi culpa presumptionis humanæ dissipata fuisset.

"Hâc formâ locutus est Adam, hâc formâ locutionis locuti sunt omnes posteri ejus usque ad ædificationem turris Babel quæ turris confusionis interpretatur," &c.—(*De Vulgari Eloquio.* Lib. i. cap. vii.)

[1] Lib. i. cap. xii.

The miscellaneous writings of the great Tuscan consist of a collection of odes, sonnets, and ballads, chiefly in honour of Beatrice. They partake much of the style of Petrarch's sonnets. He also translated the seven Psalms into Italian verse from the Latin. Four of his letters are extant: one to the people of Florence, commencing, "Populo mi, quid feci tibi?" another to the Emperor, already alluded to; another to the Princes of Italy and Senators of Rome; the fourth being addressed to Can grande della Scala, at whose Court he found an asylum during his exile.

But all these works, sufficient in themselves to establish a great literary reputation, dwindle into comparative insignificance by the side of the great poem which has made the name of Dante a pillar of intellectual fire, not only to Italy, but to the whole civilised word — the "Divina Commedia."

Innumerable are the writers who have endeavoured to discover the source from which Dante derived the plan of his poem. Fontanini asserts that the idea of dividing Hell into circles was borrowed from a romance, entitled "Il Meschino," in which the hero is made to enter the purgatory of St. Patrick in Ireland. Bottari, in a letter to

a member of the Academia della Crusca, refutes the assertion of Fontanini, by stating that, after a careful comparison of the work in question, he discovered that "Il Meschino" was written in the Provençal dialect, and not translated into Italian until after Dante's death. He, moreover, suggests that the author borrowed from Dante. Others are of opinion that Dante derived the groundwork of his poem from the vision of Alberic the monk.[1] De Romanis boldly upholds the originality of the poem; Denina and others suggest that Dante borrowed from two French novels of the thirteenth century; whilst Guinguené maintains that a work of Dante's tutor, Brunetto Latini, entitled "Il Tesoretto," was the foundation of the "Divina Commedia." A host of other writers might be quoted, each fondly cherishing an opinion of his own. This very diversity of opinion is perhaps the most conclusive evidence of its originality.

"What relation," indignantly exclaims Maffei, "have such paltry and narrow-minded assertions with that admirable poem, which is a description of the universe?—with those realms of woe where the damned are tortured by so many

[1] Written in barbarous Latin prose about the beginning of the twelfth century. *Vide* note to Cary's Life of Dante, annexed to his translation of the "Divine Comedy."

and various punishments ?—with that purgatory wherein the human spirit is purified and prepared for Heaven ? — with that Paradise where the poet portrays the glory of the great Creator ? " [1]

Bold, indeed, must be the critic who dares place a trashy novel in comparison with a work that comprises a description of the earth and of the heavenly bodies, the various types of character of the human race,—pictures of virtue and of vice, of good deeds and of evil deeds—of happiness and of woe—the whole adorned with so much erudition, enriched with such power of eloquence and keen satire, and moreover containing the most remarkable historical events of the age in which the poet lived. Rather let us seek in the poet's mind for the mould in which "The Divine Comedy" was cast ; let us investigate the circumstances of his life ; let us examine the affections and the passions of the man ; let us probe his wounds, albeit with a physician's care, and we may exclaim with Shelley :

"Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong ;
They learn in suffering, what they teach in song."

Dante was bereft of what he most loved on

[1] "La gloria di Colui che tutto move."—*Dante.*

earth, and was an exile. His vast creative genius bade him raise an eternal monument to Beatrice, and in verse he relieved his heart from the pain he suffered at being banished by his ungrateful country.[1]

A comparison might not inaptly be drawn between Dante and Homer, though in many respects their poems are dissimilar. Like Greece, Italy was divided into small principalities and distracted by internal feuds. Both bards pointed out the necessity of Unity. Dante was convinced of the utter impossibility of each petty state of Italy preserving its independence, unless all agreed to the establishment of some central power with an armed force at its disposal sufficient to defend them against foreign invasion, and to quell internal discords. This central power was to be invested in the Emperor as chief of the Ghibellines. He described a Hell, in which he placed the enemies of Italy,—a

[1] "It is the scale of magnificence on which this conception was framed, and the wonderful development of it in all its parts, that may justly entitle our poet to rank among the few minds to whom the power of a great creative faculty can be ascribed."—*Cary.*

"It had the advantage of combining the most profound feelings of religion, with those vivid recollections of patriotic glory, which were necessarily suggested by the re-appearance of the illustrious dead on this novel theatre. Such, in a word, was the magnificence of its scheme, that it may justly be considered as the most sublime conception of the human intellect."—*Sismondi's Hist. de la Litt. Ital.*

Purgatory for those who had not maintained their country's cause with the generous heart and the strong hand; and a Paradise, where heavenly joys awaited those who had devoted their energies to the good cause—a Paradise in which he had prepared a throne with an imperial diadem for that "great Harry" whom he expectantly hailed as the restorer of Italy to her pristine splendour. As unity was his object, and community of language one of the means to attain it, he wrote the poem in the Italian in preference to the Latin language.

Having pointed out the political object Dante had in view, it behoves us to examine the moral or æsthetical bearing of the poem. According to Gravina, the Paradise of the poet was meant to denote that happy state which the sage enjoys, when, by meditation, he has obtained entire control over the senses. To attain this happiness, it is necessary that the mind shall have been submitted to the test of reason, figuratively expressed by Purgatory. Reason, again, is not in itself sufficient to overcome vice; hence the introduction of a Hell, in which is shadowed forth the nature of the vices which torment those who are slaves to them in life. Gravina founds this opinion upon a passage in Dante's "De

Monarchiâ," in which, after saying that man is a sort of middle creature between the corruptible and the incorruptible, consisting of a soul and of a body, he says that providence intended the energies of man to be employed in the attainment of two objects: happiness in this life, which consists in the practice of virtues, represented emblematically by the terrestrial paradise —that is to say, a state of innocence unoppressed by guilt—and eternal beatitude, which consists in the enjoyment of the divine presence, and which man cannot attain by his own virtues without divine aid. This is represented by the celestial paradise.

The allegorical sense is explained by its allusions to historical events, and to the propensities of our human nature. The anagogical or mystical sense is self-evident, in the high religious feeling throughout the poem. An idea which originated in the brain of a philosopher, had to be clothed in a poetical garb. Giving reins to his imagination, he mentally traversed a Hell, a Purgatory, and a Paradise of his own creation. Beatrice, in the garb of Theology, is made to descend from her celestial estate to guide her lover through the realms of woe. Moral Philosophy, in the person of Virgil, is sent by

Beatrice to lead her friend as far as mortal is permitted to tread—to the terrestrial paradise. A panoramic view of the past, the present, and the future, is brought before us; the sublimest truths are forcibly impressed upon the mind; whilst one of the most striking and characteristic features of this wonderful production is its simplicity and unity.

In the first canto of the Inferno, the poet imagines himself in a dark forest—he has lost his way, and knows not in which direction to turn his steps; he beholds before him a mountain, the summit of which is illuminated by the first rays of the morning sun, and he commences its ascent. Three wild beasts cross his path and prevent his advance—a panther, a lion, and a she-wolf: he recoils with fear, when Virgil is sent by Beatrice to be his guide. The panther is supposed to represent luxury, or sensuality; the lion, pride, or ambition; and the she-wolf, avarice. The dark forest denotes the vicious propensities of youth. Virgil, sent by Beatrice, represents reason guided by Divine grace to lead him into the path of virtue.[1]

In the second canto he prepares for the

[1] According to some commentators, the Panther denotes Florence; the Lion, Charles of Valois; and the she-wolf, Rome.

journey, but fearing lest his own courage should fail, he entreats Virgil to consider whether he is equal to the task. Virgil bids him be of good cheer, and informs him who has called him to this mission :—

> "I was among the tribe
> Who rest suspended,[1] when a dame so blest
> And lovely, I besought her to commend,
> Called me. Her eyes were brighter than the star
> Of day; and she with gentle voice and soft,
> Angelically tuned, her speech addressed:
> 'O courteous shade of Mantua! thou whose fame
> Yet lives, and shall live long as nature lasts,
> A friend, not of my fortune, but myself,
> On the wide desert in his road has met
> Hindrance so great, that he through fear has turn'd.
> Now much I dread lest he past help have stray'd,
> And I be risen too late for his relief,
> From what in heaven of him I heard. Speed now,
> And by thy eloquent persuasive tongue,
> And by all means for his deliverance meet
> Assist him; so to me will comfort spring.
> I who now bid thee on this errand forth,
> Am Beatricé; from a place I come
> Revisited with joy. Love brought me thence,
> Who prompts my speech.'"

Thus comforted, the poet follows Virgil with a light heart, and the two commence the journey.

In the third canto the travellers arrive at the gates of hell: written in dim characters, Dante

[1] In purgatory.

reads above the lofty arch of a portal the terrible words :—

"Through me you pass into the city of woe :
Through me you pass into eternal pain :
Through me among the people lost for aye.
Justice the founder of my fabric moved :
To rear me was the task of power divine,
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.
Before me, things create were none, save things
Eternal—and eternal I endure.
All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

These words, according to Venturi, are meant to imply the eternal and immutable justice of God.

They both enter. Virgil informs him that this is the place of punishment of those who had passed their time in a state of indifference to good or evil. They reach the banks of the river Acheron : Charon, with "eyes of burning coal," offers to ferry them across the livid stream, when Dante, overcome with fear, falls into a trance. He is awakened by a clap of thunder (Canto IV.), and is invited by Virgil to enter the first circle of hell :[1]

"'Now let us to the blind world there beneath
Descend,' the bard began, all pale of look :
'I go the first, and thou shalt follow next.'"

[1] The allegory here is supposed to indicate that, aroused by the deep voice of Reason, the sensual passions being overcome by Divine Grace, man is enabled to contemplate the horrors of vice.

Attributing the pallor of his cheek to fear, Dante questions him, when he is informed that it is pity, not fear, that makes him pale. The first circle is the abode of all those who have not been baptised, and the air is rent with sighs; they are condemned to "desire without hope,"—of these was Virgil. Dante, grieved to hear that so many "souls of mighty worth" were thus doomed, inquires if none of them were ever allowed to quit this place of woe? Virgil replies, that on the advent of one "with victorious trophy crown'd" (our Saviour), many were exalted to heaven.

They are then met by Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, who hail Virgil as one of themselves, and ask Dante to join them. They now arrive at the foot of a magnificent castle, "seven times with lofty walls begirt," and defended by a moat. They cross the water, as if it were dry land, and passing through seven gates, issue forth upon the Elysian fields. There the poet beholds the illustrious spirits of the past:

"Electra there I saw, accompanied
By many, among whom Hector I knew,
Anchises' pious son; and, with hawk's eye,
Cæsar all arm'd, and by Camilla there
Penthesilea. On the other side,
Old King Latinus, seated by his child

Lavinia; and that Brutus I beheld
Who Tarquin chased; Lucretia, Cato's wife,
Marcia, with Julia and Cornelia there;
And, sole apart retired, the soldan fierce.
Then, when a little more I raised my brow,
I spied the master of the sapient throng,
Seated amid the philosophic train.
Him all admire, all pay him reverence due.
There Socrates and Plato both I marked;
Nearest to him in rank, Democritus,
Who sets the world at chance; Diogenes,
With Heraclitus, and Empedocles,
And Anaxagoras, and Thales sage,
Zeno, and Dioscorides well read
In Nature's secret lore. Orpheus I mark'd,
And Linus, Tully and moral Seneca,
Euclid and Ptolemy, Hippocrates,
Galenus, Avicen, and him who made
That commentary vast, Averroes."

Leaving this learned company, they enter the second circle of hell.[1]

Minos, the judge of hell, admonishes Dante to beware where he enters. This is the abode of carnal sinners, who are driven about in a continual whirlwind, in a place "where light is silent all."[2] Here he beholds Semiramis, Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Achilles, and Paris; and among the rest, the beautiful and unfortunate Francesca di Rimini.

The allegory here is supposed to be, that

[1] Canto v. [2] "Luogo d' ogni luce muto."

Minos represents the conscience of sinners, who, though they feel its stings, do not abandon their evil courses. The admonition is to warn man not to be led astray by the allurements of pleasure. The illicit love and punishment of Francesca di Rimini are held up as an illustrative example.

On awakening from the deep swoon into which he had fallen on hearing the sad tale of Francesca, Dante finds himself in the third circle, of hell, the abode of gluttons. Showers of hail and sleet and rank water, pour incessantly upon its miserable inmates, who serve as food to the three-headed monster, Cerberus. On beholding Dante and his guide, the "hell-hound" trembles with rage, and shows his fangs. Virgil throws a handful of earth into his gaping jaws, which pacifies the animal. A Florentine *bon vivant* accosts Dante, and predicts to him the civil wars of Florence, and the entrance of Charles of Valois into the city. Dante enquires after Farinata degli Uberti, the Ghibelline leader, and other noble Florentines, and is told that he will find them in the other circles.

Cerberus is supposed to represent the physical cravings of hunger. The handful of earth thrown

[1] Canto vi.

into his maw by Virgil, indicates that man should be satisfied with plain and simple food: the savage propensities of the monster imply the appetites of the glutton. The showers of hail and sleet and foul water are types of the infirmities which follow close upon drunkenness and gluttony, which not only are detrimental to health, but obscure the faculties of the mind.

The fourth circle[1] is the California of the infernal regions. Here reigns Plutus. It is the abode alike of the avaricious and the prodigal. With mutual upbraidings, the unhappy wretches hurl ponderous weights against each other's breasts. Popes and cardinals are to be found among the rest. Leaving this abode of woe, the travellers follow a gurgling stream till they reach the Stygian lake, into which it disembogues itself. In the stagnant mire of the lake, they behold the victims of anger; stark naked they stand, with savage looks. Beneath the water of the lake sluggards are confined, whose sighs, gurgling in their throats, make bubbles on the surface.

Plutus personifies riches, so fatal to the human race. The ponderous weights which the spendthrift and the miser heave at each other, denote

[1] Canto vii.

the evil thoughts, the cares and anxieties that harass their minds. The unhappy inmates of the Stygian lake are portrayed stark naked, as symbolical of passion ; the sluggards are hidden, as being beneath notice.

Proceeding along the shores of the lake, the travellers came in sight of a lofty tower. On a signal from the tower, responded to from the city of Dis, whose lofty battlements are visible in the distance, a swift bark with a single gondolier glides across the lake ; this ferryman is Phlegyas, who, incensed against Apollo for having seduced his daughter, set fire to the temple of that deity at Delphi, and was slain and sent to Tartarus for the sacrilege. Dante and Virgil enter the bark, and are ferried across to the city of Dis, the minarets of which glow from the flames burning within its walls. The inmates—the angels who fell with Lucifer—refuse to admit Dante, and endeavour to persuade Virgil to leave him. The latter enters the city to parley with the fiends, but is finally thrust out and the gates are closed upon him, when an angel descends from heaven to command admittance.

Phlegyas represents the bad effects of anger ; he is also a type of pride, the waters between

the tower and the city of Dis being allotted to the proud and to the ambitious. The swiftness of the bark shows the eagerness of ambition; it is guided by a single ferryman, to denote that the ambitious brook no compeer. The demons who endeavour to take Virgil away from Dante, signify that it is the object of Satan to keep men ignorant of their evil inclinations, by depriving them of reason, figuratively represented by Virgil. The angel may represent Divine aid acquired by prayer.

Three female Furies appear upon the battlements, and call upon Medusa. Virgil covers Dante's face, and bids him turn round, lest he should behold the Gorgon monster, and be turned to stone. The angel touches the gates of the iron walls with his wand, and they fly open. They enter the city. It is a city of tombs and sepulchres, out of which flames arise, and groans and lamentations.[1]

If man did not shield himself under the cloak of reason (Virgil) he would fall a prey to the delights of worldly pleasures, the fatal attractions of which are represented by Medusa. The tombs of the city of Dis are the abode of heretics, the flames representing the obstinate fallacy of

[1] Canto ix.

their opinions. The slabs on the tombs being half-uplifted, Dante expresses a wish to see the inmates. Scarcely is the wish expressed, when the spirit of Farinata degli Uberti, the Ghibel-line leader, rises from one of them.[1] He is placed here as a disciple of Epicurus, who asserted that the body and soul perished together. Dante takes this occasion of paying a tribute to Farinata, who alone raised his voice to save Florence when the question was mooted, whether it was not advisable to raze the city to the ground, on the plea that it was a stronghold of the Guelphs. Dante is also accosted by the father of Guido Cavalcanti, the poet. Frederick II. of Sicily has also a place in one of the tombs, on account of the incessant warfare he waged against the Church.

From the verge of a precipice, which encloses the seventh circle, they behold three other circles: Virgil instructs Dante regarding them. They contain those who have committed acts of injury, either openly or by fraud. The inhabitants of Sodom and usurers dwell in the other circle.

By a rugged path, the travellers descend into the seventh circle.[2] The entrance is guarded

[1] Canto x.

[2] Canto xii.

by the Minotaur, which affords a classical allusion to the story of Theseus and Ariadne. They come to a river of blood, in which tyrants are submerged, who, when they endeavour to reach the shore, are driven back by Centaurs armed with bows and arrows. At the request of the Minotaur, Nessus carries our travellers over the ford, pointing out by name the inhabitants of the river of blood, among whom are Alexander; Dionysius, of Syracuse; Azzalino d'Este, the tyrant of Padua; Abizzo d'Este, Lord of Ferrara; Guy de Montfort, son of the Earl of Leicester, who slew with his dagger Henry, son of Richard Earl of Cornwall (brother of Henry III. of England), in the church of Viterbo, to avenge his father Simon's death.[1]

Where the sanguinary stream is deepest are submerged the greater tyrants: Attila, the scourge of God; Pyrrhus, King of Epirus; and Tarquinius Sextus, who outraged Lucretia, the wife of Collatine: a host of marauders of lesser note, who devastated Italy, are pointed out by the obliging Centaur.

By the Minotaur, Dante is supposed to per-

[1] Henry's heart was embalmed and sent to London, "where," says Venturi, "it is preserved in a cup of gold placed upon his monument in the Royal Chapel."

sonify the brutal passions; the river of blood explains itself. In a second compartment of the seventh circle, they enter a dark forest, where the foliage, instead of being green, is of a dark dusky colour. On their branches the Harpies build their nests.[1] The souls of those who have committed suicide are confined within the trunks of these trees. At Virgil's instigation, Dante breaks off a branch from one of them, and starts back horror-stricken on beholding blood trickle from the rent, and hearing a plaintive voice exclaim, "Why pluckest thou me?" Dante questions him, and the spirit, which is that of Pier delle Vigne, secretary to Frederick II. of Sicily, tells his history. The forest of withered trees denotes despair, the harpies the avenging passions that betray men into commission of the crime of suicide. The third compartment of the seventh circle is a plain of dry and burning sand, where sinners against God and against Nature are tormented by flakes of fire falling eternally upon them.

Proceeding onwards, Dante beholds a rivulet of blood gushing out of the forest. Virgil explains the source from whence it springs, in the following allegory:

[1] *Vide* Virgil: Æneid.

"'In midst of Ocean,' forthwith he began,
'A desolate country lies, which Crete is named;
Under whose monarch, in old times, the world
Lived pure and chaste. A mountain rises there,
Called Ida, joyous once with leaves and streams,
Deserted now like a forbidden thing.
It was the spot which Rhea, Saturn's spouse,
Chose for the secret cradle of her son;
And better to conceal him, drown'd in shouts
His infant cries. Within the mount, upright,
An ancient form there stands, and huge, that turns
His shoulders towards Damiata; and at Rome,
As in his mirror, looks. Of finest gold
His head is shaped, pure silver are the breast
And arms, thence to the middle is of brass,
And downward all beneath well-temper'd steel,
Save the right foot of potter's clay, on which
Than on the other more erect he stands.
Each part, except the gold, is rent throughout;
And from the fissure tears distil, which join'd
Penetrate to that cave. They in their course,
Thus far precipitated down the rock,
Form Acheron, and Styx, and Phlegethon;
Then by this straiten'd channel passing hence
Beneath, e'en to the lowest depth of all,
Form there Cocytus, of whose lake (thyself
Shalt see it) I here give thee no account.'"[1]

The description of this statue is almost word for word that of which Nebuchadnezzar speaks, when he tells his dream; but Venturi is a "second Daniel," and gives it a different interpretation. The allegory, he says, is that of the four ages. The statue is the emblem of Time;

[1] Canto xiv.

the head of gold is the golden age of innocence, before our first parents fell; the other metals denote the ages that followed.[1] The fissure throughout, with the exception of the head, denotes that after the golden age sin prevailed; the foot of clay implies the fragility of earthly things; the four rivers are emblematical of sorrow, melancholy, deluded hope, and despair. The statue has his shoulder turned towards Damietta, as the Past, east of Crete, whilst it looks toward the Future under the figure of Rome. The statue is placed in Crete, because the poets have imagined that the first age commenced under Saturn.

The amount of classical learning scattered throughout the poem is wonderful, when we consider that printing was not invented in Dante's time.

Journeying onward along the banks of the crimson-waved stream, Dante meets his old tutor, Brunetto Latini. Commentators do not agree as to the reasons why Dante has placed his tutor here, for he speaks of him with affection and esteem in the dialogue which ensues between them. Brunetto admonishes Dante to advance in the path upon which he had entered, saying

[1] "Aurea prima sata est ætas," &c.—*Ovid.*

that fame would await him. The pilgrims soon arrive whither the river falls in a noisy cascade, a beautiful description of one of the Italian rivers in the poet's own land. Virgil bids him unloose the rope that braced his girdle, and holds it down the roaring abyss, whereupon a monster, fearful to behold, uprose to sight. The description of the monster "Geryon," emblematical of Fraud, is remarkable.[1]

"Lo! the fell monster with the deadly sting,
Who passes mountains, breaks through fenced walls
And firm embattled spears, and with his filth
Taints all the world.
His face the semblance of a just man's wore,
So kind and gracious was its outward cheer;
The rest was serpent all; two shaggy claws
Reach'd to the armpits; and the back and breast,
And either side, were painted o'er with nodes
And orbits."

On the back of this monster they descend to the eighth circle of Hell.

"There is a place within the depths of Hell
Call'd Malebolge, all of rock dark-stained
With hue ferruginous, e'en as the steep
That round it circling winds. Right in the midst
Of that abominable region yawns
A spacious gulf profound, whereof the fame

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[1] Canto xvii.—The monster of the same name destroyed by Hercules, had three heads and three bodies.

Due time shall tell. The circle that remains,
Throughout its round, between the gulf and base
Of the high craggy banks, successive forms
Ten bastions, in its hollow bottom rais'd."[1]

The above lines describe the eighth circle, in which various descriptions of fraudulent sinners meet their punishment. Seducers are here lashed on their naked backs by horned demons. Among the rest, Dante holds up to eternal shame and infamy a Bolognese, Venedico Caccianimico, who, to gratify the passion of the tyrant, Obizzo d'Este, whom we have already beheld in the stagnant lake, connived at the dishonour of his own sister by the ceremony of a false marriage. Jason is here for seducing Hypsipile.[2] In another of the gulfs, immersed in mire, are the spirits of men who passed their lives in flattery. Virgil carries Dante down into the third gulf, wherein are punished those guilty of simony, who are buried head foremost in the living rock, their legs, from the knee downwards, protruding. Livid flames of fire burn on the soles of their feet, putting them to excruciating pain. Dante addresses one, who proves to be Pope Nicholas III.[3] The unfortunate Pope takes Dante for Pope Boniface VIII.,

[1] Canto xviii of Inferno. [2] Daughter of Thoas, king of Lemnos.
[3] Nicholas III. died in 1281; Boniface VIII. in 1303.

whom he did not expect so soon, and expresses his astonishment. He then predicts the like torments for Clement V., who transferred the Papal See from Rome to Avignon.[1] Dante here pays off a grudge he owed the popes, and comforts the unfortunate Nicholas by telling him that he well deserved his fate, and that he should use harder language if respect for St. Peter did not restrain him. Virgil embraces Dante with delight, and carries him up again safely to the road.

The reason of this mode of punishment is explained thus: man being created with head erect and eyes uplifted to behold high and divine objects, having in this instance preferred mean and base and worldly things, is punished accordingly with his head downwards.

The next gulf[2] is the abode of false prophets and those who pretended to predict coming events. Their heads are turned round towards their backs, implying how futile their attempts to predict the future, and that, seeking to look too far forward, they were looking continually backward from the right point. Manto, a prophetess, the daughter of Tiresias of Thebes, was compelled to fly from her native land on her

[1] Clement V. died in 1314. [2] Canto xx.

father's death: she wandered to Italy, where her son, Ocnus, founded the city of Mantua. Dante makes Virgil give a beautiful description of the Lago di Garda and the country about Mantua, the birth-place of the poet.[1]

"Aloft in Italy's delightful land
A lake there lies, at foot of that proud Alp,
That o'er the Tyrol locks Germania in;
Its name Benacus, from whose ample breast
A thousand springs, methinks, and more, between
Camonica and Garda, issuing forth,
Water the Apennine. There is a spot
At midway of that lake, where he who bears
Of Trento's flock the pastoral staff, with him
Of Brescia, and the Veronese, might each
Passing that way his benediction give.
A garrison of goodly site and strong,
Peschiera[2] stands, to awe with front opposed
The Bergamese and Brescian, whence the shore
More slope each way descends. There, whatsoe'er
Benacus'[3] bosom holds not, tumbling o'er
Down falls, and winds a river flood beneath
Through the green pastures. Soon as in his course
The stream makes head, Benacus then no more
They call the name, but Mincius,[4] till at last
Reaching Governo, into Po he falls.
Not far his course hath run, when a wide flat
It finds, which overstretching as a marsh
It covers, pestilent in summer oft.
Hence journeying, the savage maiden[5] saw

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[1] Virgil was born in the vicinity of Mantua, not in the city itself.
[2] Has a strong Austrian garrison (1850).
[3] Benacus—The lake of Garda.
[4] The river Mincio, which springs from the lake, and runs into the Po near Governo, a small fortress. [5] Manto.

Midst of the fen a territory waste
And naked of inhabitants. To shun
All human converse, here she with her slaves,
Plying her arts, remain'd, and lived, and left
Her body tenantless. Thenceforth the tribes,
Who round were scatter'd, gathering to that place
Assembled; for its strength was great, enclosed
On all parts by the fen. On those dead bones
They rear'd themselves a city, for her sake
Calling it Mantua, who first chose the spot,
Nor asked another omen for the name."

Among other seers and astrologers, Michael Scott, who was attracted to the Court of Frederick II. of Sicily, is mentioned.

Virgil warns Dante that the sun had risen, and they move on across a bridge that crosses over the fifth gulf. In boiling pitch, peculators of every description are thrown headlong by grim demons, and when they struggle to rise to the surface are pulled down again by fiends with iron grappling-hooks. Dante enumerates men who had been known to peculate in different states of Italy. The sixth gulf is the abode of hypocrites. They are doomed to wear hoods glittering like gold outside, but so heavily lined with lead that they can move but slowly under the pressure—a type of the character of hypocrites, who, assuming the outward garb of sanctity, are ravenous wolves in their hearts. Among

the rest, Caïaphas, the high priest, who counselled the Pharisees that it were fitting for one man to suffer for the people, has a more awful doom. He is nailed to a cross, which is fixed horizontally on the ground by three stakes, and so placed that all who pass that way must tread upon him.

The travellers have some difficulty in finding their way out of the sixth gulf; Dante thereby insinuating how difficult it is, even for well-intentioned men, to avoid hypocrisy—the desire of being thought good prevailing over being so in reality. For a moment, a shade of sadness passes over Virgil's countenance. Dante, who eagerly scans every movement of his guide, compares it to the first hoar frosts of a winter morning, dispelled quickly by the warm rays of the sun. The opening verses of the twenty-second canto afford a beautiful example of descriptive poetry:

"In the year's early nonage, when the sun
Tempers his tresses in Aquarius' urn,
And now towards equal day the nights recede;
Whereas the rime upon the earth puts on
Her dazzling sister's image, but not long
Her milder sway endures; then riseth up
The village hind, whom fails his wintry store,
And looking out beholds the plain around
All whiten'd; whence impatiently he smites

His thighs, and to his hut returning,
There paces to and fro, wailing his lot,
As a discomforted and helpless man ;[1]
Then comes he forth again, and feels new hope
Spring in his bosom ; finding e'en thus soon
The world has changed its countenance, grasps his crook,
And forth to pasture drives his little flock :
To me my guide dishearten'd, when I saw
His troubled forehead ; and so speedily
That ill was cured."

Comforted by the renewed smile upon Virgil's countenance, Dante enters the seventh gulf, the abode of robbers and highwaymen. These are tormented by serpents, which represent the stings of conscience. Vanni Fucci, a noted robber (the illegitimate son of Fuccio de Lazzeri of Pistoja), who had plundered the cathedral, and then, by perjury, caused the death of one of his fellow-citizens, Vanni della Nona, who was hanged for the offence of which he was falsely accused, predicts the calamities that will befall Florence and the fall of the Bianchi.[2] Fucci is pursued by a monster, Cacus, who has nothing in common with the robber slain by Hercules, except the name.

The punishment of evil counsellors in the eighth gulf, each of whom is consumed in a

[1] Snow. He must be a poor farmer who mistakes frost for snow.
[2] Canto xxiv.

flame of fire, with the exception of Ulysses and Diomede, who burn together (as emblematical of the friendship that united them), gives rise to another exquisite passage descriptive of Italian scenery :—

"As in the season, when the sun least veils
His face that lightens all, what time the fly
Gives way to the shrill gnat, the peasant then,
Upon some cliff reclined, beneath him sees
Fire-flies innumerous spangling o'er the vale,
Vineyard or tilth, where his daily labour lies.
With flames so numberless throughout its space
Shone the eighth charm."

Ulysses narrates his adventures, and his death after founding Lisbon.[1]

Among the false counsellors is the spirit of Guido di Montefeltro. This Guido was a valiant warrior and a cotemporary of Dante. He exchanged his coat of mail for a monk's cowl, to repent him of the blood he had shed in his lifetime. It was he who counselled Pope Boniface VIII., who was laying siege to Penestrino, the stronghold of the Colonna, to give them fair promises, but not to keep them. Dante makes Guido the scapegoat for a diatribe against Boniface, whom he never fails to punish severely whenever the opportunity presents

[1] Venturi says that Dante has borrowed the fable from Pliny.

itself. For his deceitful counsel, Boniface gave Guido de Montefeltro absolution from all his sins. When he died (says the departed spirit), St. Francis, to which order of monks he belonged, claimed him; but Satan produced a better claim, and placed the unwilling spirit in the eighth gulf.

In the ninth gulf are confined the spirits of schismatics and heretics, and such as have created dissensions in the state. Some are represented as smitten in twain, others are maimed in different ways, according to the magnitude of the schisms they had occasioned. Crossing an arch over the tenth gulf, the travellers behold the abode of alchemists and forgers, who suffer all sorts of leprous diseases. It serves to introduce different historical personages of the thirteenth century. This, and the three following cantos, are rich in classical metaphor. Following the sound of a horn—

> "So terrible a blast
> Orlando blew not, when the dismal rout
> O'erthrew the host of Charlemain"—

Virgil and Dante approach the ninth circle. The giant Antæus carries them down to the bottom of the circle. It is divided into four inner circles, in the frozen waters of which are

confined traitors of various descriptions. Here, among others, is Count Ugolino. This, and the preceding canto, are affluent of historical illustrations of the civil wars of Italy. The fourth round of the ninth circle is the abode of Lucifer: Dante is supposed to have arrived, by this time, at the centre of the earth. Fixed in a lake of ice, one-half of the body of Lucifer is in one hemisphere, the other half in the other. The portrait of Lucifer, from which Milton is said to have borrowed, concludes the description of hell. Dante turns his steps towards the planets, the stars, and the realms beyond. The poet has imagined, as the connecting link of so vast a conception, that Lucifer, of immeasurable stature, falling headlong from Heaven, dislodged so much earth in his fall as to raise the mountain of purgatory which joins the planets.

Dante's description of the arch fiend is terrible:

"That emperor, who sways
The realm of sorrow, at mid breast from the ice
Stood forth: and I in stature am more like
A giant, than the giants are his arms;
Mark now how great that whole must be, which suits
With such a part. If he were beautiful
As he is hideous now, and yet did dare
To scowl upon his Maker, well from him
May all our misery flow. Oh, what a sight!

How passing strange it seem'd, when I did spy
Upon his head three faces: one in front
Of hue vermilion, the other two with this
Midway each shoulder join'd and at the crest;
The right 'twixt wan and yellow seem'd; the left
To look on, such as come from whence old Nile
Stoops to the lowlands. Under each shot forth
Two mighty wings, enormous as became
A bird so vast. Sails never such I saw
Outstretch'd on the wide sea. No plumes had they,
But were in texture like a bat; and there
He flapped i' th' air, that from him issued still
Three winds, wherewith Cocytus to its depth
Was frozen. At six eyes he wept: the tears
Adown three chins distill'd with bloody foam.
At every mouth his teeth a sinner champ'd,
Bruised as with ponderous engine; so that three
Were in this guise tormented."

The three traitors Satan is grinding between his teeth, are Judas Iscariot, Brutus (who helped to assassinate Cæsar), and Cassius, his fellow-conspirator. Virgil turns the earth on its axis, so that the feet of Lucifer appear upwards, and explains the law of gravitation to Dante. They issue forth upon the world, and behold the stars shining in the heavens.

Virgil washes the face of Dante with the fresh dew of heaven, to clear his countenance from the smoke and dust of hell, and girds him with a reed—advised so to do by the spirit of Cato of Utica. The reed is emblematical

of patience. They behold a vessel gliding over the waters, under the guidance of an angel, conveying souls to purgatory. The description of the "bird of God"[1] is highly poetical. Among the shadowy passengers, Dante recognizes his friend Cazella, a Florentine musician, with whom he was wont to beguile his leisure hours. He entertains them with a song, when Cato warns them to hasten their departure. The travellers now arrive at the foot of the mountain.

Purgatory is divided into three parts: the base of the mountain to the first circle; the seven circles in which souls are purged from the seven capital sins, which occupy the greater part of the mountain, raised above each other as in the Roman amphitheatres; and the terrestrial paradise, on the summit of the mountain. The mountain is so steep, that they find the ascent impossible, the Poet thereby indicating the weakness of human nature, and how difficult it is for man to leave the tracks of vice, for the path of virtue. They behold a body of spirits, of whom they ask the way. The spirit who replies is that of Manfred, the valiant son of Frederick II. of Sicily, who was slain at

[1] "L'uccel divino."

Benevento. Ascending the mountain by a narrow path,—for broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, whilst narrow is the path that leads to eternal life,—Dante and his guide rest themselves upon a ledge of rock, behind which they discover the spirits of those who had postponed repentance to the very last moment, and whom the angel of the Lord prevented from advancing further.[1] They meet others who came by violent deaths, but who repented before they expired. Several historical personages are among them, one of whom, Buoncente da Montefeltro, fell at the battle of Campaldino, at which Dante was present. They request Dante, on his return to earth, to invoke the prayers of the living for their departed souls—one of the points of the Catholic faith which Dante questions. On applying to Virgil to solve his doubts, he is referred to Beatrice. Venturi, and other commentators on the "Divine Comedy," avoid touching upon this controversial point.

Virgil embraces Sordello, a poet of Mantua, and Dante takes the opportunity of launching forth into an invective against the discords by which Italy was distracted, concluding with an

[1] Canto iv.

invocation to the emperor to come and re-establish order in his unhappy country.[1] Dante compares Rome to a desolate widow, a metaphor repeatedly employed by Petrarch in his letters to the popes at Avignon, to induce them to restore the Papal See to the Holy City. Sordello leads his new acquaintances to an eminence, from which they behold a valley, rich in verdure and flowers, where wander the spirits of many famous men, of whom the poet gives a brief description. Here we find Rudolph of Hapsburg, Ottocar of Bohemia, Philip III. of France (*Le hardi*), Henry of Navarre, Peter of Arragon, Henry III. of England, and other noted historical personages. The flowers in the valley, denote that the fame and honours they acquired were perishable. In this valley, which is guarded by two angels, whose swords have blunted points, to prevent the entrance of the serpent, the three descend together. Dante slumbers, and in his sleep is carried up to the gates of purgatory. The angel deputed by St. Peter to keep the gates of purgatory, with a key of silver and a key of gold, tries the locks, when, to adopt the language of our own Milton, describing a similar circumstance :—

[1] Canto vi., verse 76, and following.

"On a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
The Infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder."

Strains of holy music—they are singing the "Te Deum laudamus"—blended in sweet melody with the solemn tones of the organ, come swelling high and clear through the wide portals, and float away in the distance.

The gates close behind them, and they advance by a winding path. Passages from Holy Writ are sculptured upon cornices of the purest marble, illustrative of humility. They behold the punishment of the proud, doomed to crawl along bearing heavy weights, and of the envious, clothed in sackcloth, and having their eyes sewed up with an iron thread. Proceeding onwards, they are enveloped in a dense fog, where the sin of anger is purged. In a waking dream Dante beheld remarkable instances of patience; among others, the martyrdom of St. Stephen, whose dying looks beseech pardon for his murderers. In the sixteenth canto, the poet exemplifies that man is a free agent, the master of his own will, and that the errors of men must be sought for within themselves; he disclaims as mischievous and absurd the doctrine

of necessity, which borders upon the "fatalism" of the Mahommedan.

"Forth from his[1] plastic hand, who charm'd beholds
Her image ere she yet exist, the soul
Comes like a babe, that wantons sportively,
Weeping and laughing in its wayward moods;
As artless, and as ignorant of aught,
Save that her Maker, being one who dwells
With gladness ever, willingly she turns
To whate'er yields her joy. Of some slight good
The flavour soon she tastes; and snared by that,
With fondness she pursues it; if no guide
Recal, no rein direct her wandering course.
Hence it behoved the law should be a curb."

He then asserts that many of the disasters of Italy derive their origin from the combination of temporal and spiritual authority in the person of the Pope —

"The Church of Rome,
Mixing two governments that ill assort,
Hath miss'd her footing, fallen into the mire."

(Dante then still cherished the idea of the advent into Italy of the Emperor Henry.)

The sin of slothfulness is purged in the fourth circle, which leads to a dissertation on love, of which slothfulness is a defect: in the fifth circle, grovelling on the earth, are purged the

[1] The Creator's.

souls of the avaricious. Among these we find Pope Adrian V., and Hugh Capet :—

> "The root
> Of that ill plant whose shade such poison sheds
> O'er all the Christian land, that seldom thence
> 'Good fruit is gathered.' * * *
> * * * * Born of one who plied
> The slaughterer's trade at Paris." * *

Charles of Valois, who slew Conradin, and Philip IV., who invaded Italy, are descendants of Hugh Capet—thence Dante's hatred of his race. Francis I. prohibited the reading of Dante in his dominions, because of this reflection on the birth of his ancestor.

Dante and Virgil are joined by the shade of Statius, who, purged from his sins, is proceeding to paradise, and who relates his life. They proceed conversing together to the sixth circle, where the sin of gluttony is purged. The gluttons are condemned to suffer hunger and thirst, and are reduced to the outline of skeletons. One of them predicts the death of Corso Donati.

The sin of incontinence is punished in the seventh, or last circle, in flames of fire. The spirits marvel at the shadow cast by Dante's body upon the flame. Guido Guinicelli, the

poet, and Arnault Daniel, address him. Their further progress being arrested by the flames, Dante's courage fails him, and he dares not advance; Virgil informs him that these flames alone separate him from Beatrice, when he no longer hesitates, and following Virgil and Statius, passes through unharmed. The three lie down to rest.

"As the goats,
That late have skipt and wanton'd rapidly
Upon the craggy cliffs, ere they had ta'en
Their supper on the herb, now silent lie
And ruminate beneath the umbrage brown,
While noon-day rages; and the goatherd leans
Upon his staff, and leaning watches them;
And as the swain, that lodges out all night
In quiet by his flock, lest beast of prey
Disperse them: even so all three abode,
I as a goat, and as the shepherds they,
Close pent on either side by shelving rock."[1]

Gazing at the stars shining in glory above him, sleep overcame him, and he dreamt:—

"About the hour,
As I believe, when Venus from the east
First lighten'd on the mountain, she whose orb
Seems always glowing with the fire of love,
A lady young and beautiful, I dream'd,
Was passing o'er a lea; and, as she came,
Methought I saw her ever and anon

[1] Canto xxvii.—*Purgatory.*

Bending to cull the flowers; and thus she sang:
Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,
That I am Leah: for my brow to weave
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.
To please me at the crystal mirror, here
I deck me. But my sister Rachel, she
Before her glass abides the livelong day,
Her radiant eyes beholding, charm'd no less,
Than I with this delightful task—her joy
In contemplation, as in labour mine."

This beautiful allegory is thus explained:—Leah, the daughter of Laban, Jacob's first wife, represents active life; she wreathes a chaplet of flowers as a recompense for good works on earth. Her sister Rachel, Jacob's second wife, represents a life of contemplation. The mirror she looks into is that of knowledge vouchsafed to her by the Supreme Being.

On reaching the summit of the mountain, where the terrestrial paradise commences, Virgil informs Dante that he can lead him no further, and bids him advance until he meets Beatrice. The twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth cantos contain a magnificent description of the terrestrial paradise. In brilliancy of imagination, this conception has perhaps never been surpassed. Advancing through a sacred thicket, his cheek fanned by soft zephyrs, breathing the most delicious odours,[1] where myriads of

[1] "Un aura dolce senza mutamento."

feathered choristers warble their notes to the soft rustling of the foliage, Dante arrives at the banks of a small rivulet, the waters of which are so limpid, that they surpass in clearness the purest stream on earth. Whilst admiring the brilliant verdure on the opposite bank, a lady makes her appearance, singing and culling the variegated flowers spread on the rich carpet beneath her feet. This fair lady is a messenger from Beatrice, and she gives Dante a description of the terrestrial paradise, the abode of Adam and Eve: keeping pace with her as she advances on the opposite bank, the streamlet still separating them, she bids him list, and look around him. A sudden but continuous ray of light illumines the sacred thicket; the most delicious melody resounds; the light increases until it glows almost like fire, and the melody gushes into song. The poet fancies he beholds in the distance seven trees of gold, but discovers that they are seven candelabra, so resplendent with light that they resemble moons. Figures robed in white, rainbows in the heavens, four-and-twenty elders of noble aspect crowned with lilies, four mystical animals decked with green boughs, each having six wings full of eyes, for the explanation of which Dante refers the reader

to the book of Ezekiel;—a triumphant car, drawn by a gryphon, half bird, half beast; outshining in splendour the chariot of the sun. On the right side of it three female figures, four on the left:—

"Three nymphs,
At the right wheel, came circling in smooth dance;
The one so ruddy, that her form had scarce
Been known within a furnace of clear flame;
The next did look as if the flesh and bones
Were emerald; snow new-fallen seemed the third.
* * * * At the other wheel,
A band quaternion, each in purple clad,
Advanced with festal step." * *

Two venerable elders, one bearing a sword; four others, and again another sleeping. A sound at which every moving thing stood still; one hundred ministers and messengers of love singing hymns of joy, and strewing flowers.—Such is the magnificent spectacle that precedes the apparition of Beatrice, who is to guide the poet from the terrestrial to the celestial paradise.

Under this figurative language Dante draws a picture of the state of the Church, borrowing largely from the Revelations of St. John. The seven candlesticks represent the seven churches of Asia, or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; the twenty-four elders represent the twenty-four

books of the Old Testament; the car is supposed to represent the chair of St. Peter; the four mystical animals the four evangelists; whilst the gryphon is symbolical of the twofold nature of our Saviour, God and Man; the three nymphs on the right wheel represent Hope, Faith, and Charity; on the left the four cardinal virtues, directed by Prudence. St. Luke and St. Paul follow; the one is in the garb of a physician, the other is armed with a sword, to demonstrate that Mercy and Justice should stand by the chair of St. Peter as they do by the throne of God. Then follow the learned doctors of the Church; and finally Beatrice, the symbol of Theology, appears.

The description of the appearance of Beatrice, the sudden thrill of love that Dante feels as his memory rushes back to the happy days of his early love, is one of the most beautiful passages of the whole poem:—

"I have beheld, ere now, at break of day,
The eastern clime all roseate; and the sky
Opposed, one deep and beautiful serene;
And the sun's face so shaded, and with mists
Attemper'd, at his rising, that the eye
Long while endured the sight; thus, in a cloud
Of flowers, that from those hands angelic rose,
And down within and outside of the car
Fell showering, in white veil with olive wreathed,

A virgin in my view appear'd, beneath
Green mantle, robed in hue of living flame:
And o'er my spirit, that so long a time
Had from her presence felt no shuddering dread,
Albeit my eyes discern'd her not, there moved
A hidden virtue from her, at whose touch
The power of ancient love was strong within me."

Dante looks back in the hope of seeing Virgil, but the latter has vanished. Beatrice reproaches him for neglect, to which a double sense may be assigned; his having neglected the study of theology, and his having forgotten his first love by marrying another after her death. She forgives him. The lady (Mathilda), whom he had first beheld on the other side of the rivulet, immerses him in the waters of Lethe—for such is the stream—which obliterates all recollection of sin. She then makes him drink of the waters of Eunöe, the taste of which revives the memory of good deeds in him who has first been immersed in the waves of Lethe. Purified and refreshed he returned—

"From the most holy wave, regenerate,
E'en as new plants renew'd with foliage new,
Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars;"

implying that a confession of our sins and true repentance can alone lead us to the contemplation of heavenly things.

The flight of Dante from the summit of the mountain of purgatory, or from the terrestrial to the celestial paradise, is effected in a moment. The paradise is divided into ten circles; the earth is immovable, and the centre of the universe.[1] He first visits the seven planets: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; the fixed constellations form the eighth circle; the ninth is the Empyrean; and the tenth the abode of the Divinity.

The Paradise of Dante is historical, philosophical, metaphysical, and allegorical. It exhibits a profound study and knowledge of astronomy and the learned sciences; but to attempt an analysis of it would be a work in itself.

Dante and Beatrice are admitted into the lunar planet in the same manner as water receives rays of light:—

> "Meseem'd as if a cloud had cover'd us,
> Translucent, solid, firm, and polish'd bright,
> Like adamant, which the sun's beam had smit.
> Within itself the ever-during pearl
> Received us; as the wave a ray of light
> Receives, and rests unbroken."[2]

The moon is the abode of those who, having

[1] This is in contradiction to his description of the centre of the earth in the Inferno.

[2] *Paradise*, Canto ii., v. 31.

taken vows of chastity, were compelled to renounce them. Beatrice explains the cause of the spots in the moon. Dante also learns that all are equally happy in paradise, though in different spheres. He inquires whether it is possible to make amends for broken vows. Beatrice replies as follows :—

"Take no vow at random: ta'en with faith
Preserve it; yet not bent, as Jephthah once,
Blindly to execute a rash resolve,
Whom better it had suited to exclaim,
'I have done ill,' than to redeem his pledge
By doing worse: or not unlike to him
In folly, that great leader of the Greeks;
Whence on the altar Iphigenia mourn'd
Her virgin beauty, and hath since made mourn
Both wise and simple, even all, who hear
Of so fell sacrifice. Be ye more staid,
O Christians! not, like feather, by each wind
Removable; nor think to cleanse yourselves
In every water. Either testament,
The old and new, is yours; and for your guide,
The shepherd of the Church. Let this suffice
To save you."

They now enter the planet Mercury, the abode of those whose object in life was honour and renown, but who paid not due attention to heavenly things. The poet is addressed by the Emperor Justinian, who draws a rapid sketch of the glory acquired by the arms of the Cæsars;

Dante does not neglect this occasion of paying a tribute to the emperor, on whom his hopes for the regeneration of Italy rested. Beatrice explains the redemption of the world by the death of our Saviour. They then mount to the third heaven, the planet Venus. As they ascend from heaven to heaven, more radiant become the smile and countenance of Beatrice, a change intended to signify that increased glory and additional strength are acquired by the human intellect, from the study of divine science.

Venus is the abode of lovers, who, although culpable at first, turned their love at last to virtuous account. Dante, in this canto, deviates from the Christian theology, and resorts to the Grecian mythology.

The sun, thus sublimely described by Dante—

> "The great minister
> Of Nature, that upon the world imprints
> The virtue of the heaven, and doles out
> Time for us with his beam—"

is the fourth planet into which they enter. This is the abode of the great divines and luminaries of the Church. We are introduced to Thomas Aquinas, who narrates the history of St. Francis, and solves certain doubts which had arisen within the poet's mind relative to our future state.

The planet Mars, or fifth heaven, is the abode of those who fought manfully in the cause of the true faith. Their luminous bodies form a cross, emblematical of the crucifixion of our Saviour. One of these luminous beings is the spirit of Cacciaguida, Dante's ancestor, who relates his adventures, and compares the state of Florence, as it was in his time, with its condition then, suggesting its rise and fall. Cacciaguida predicts the poet's banishment; he tells him that he shall find a refuge with the Lords of La Scala, the poet thereby paying a tribute of gratitude to the hospitality he received from Alboino and Can Grande della Scala, at Verona. Godefroy of Bouillon, and other great warriors, are enumerated as dwellers in the planet Mars.

A sudden and visible change in the countenance of Beatrice apprises Dante that he has entered the planet Jupiter. The luminaries shed a silvery light around, and constitute in shape an eagle. The pupil of its eye is the spirit of King David: other just monarchs dwell in this planet. Various controversial points of the Christian faith are discussed: as, the possibility of salvation for unbelievers; the inefficacy of a simple profession of belief; and man is

warned against presuming to fathom the decrees of God.[1]

The seventh heaven, the planet Saturn, is the abode of those who have passed their lives in holy retirement and contemplation. Arising in the midst is a ladder of gold, so high that its summit is lost to view; spirits are incessantly ascending and descending :—

> "The stairs are such, as whereon Jacob saw
> Angels ascending and descending, bands
> Of guardians bright."

Dante censures in no measured terms the life of luxury and indolence led by some of the pastors and prelates, and inveighs against the corruption of the monastic orders.

The poet, still accompanied by Beatrice, ascends into the eighth heaven, or the fixed constellations. Beatrice bids him look down at the world beneath him. From the constellation of the Twins, Dante beholds the planets through which he has passed, and smiles at the insignificance of the terrestrial globe

> "O'er which man strides so fiercely."—

This is a powerful passage. The immensity of space mentally surveyed by the poet is a

[1] *Paradiso*, Cantos xviii., xix., xx.

grand conception. From contemplating the earth, he turns his gaze upon the beaming eyes of Beatrice.[1]

"Behold," exclaims his heavenly guide, "the triumph of Christ accompanied by a number infinite of the souls of the blessed, and of the Virgin Mary." The eyes of the poet are dazzled by so much splendour. The joy depicted in the radiant countenance of Beatrice is such that he cannot give utterance to it in words.[2]

Various questions of faith are discussed with St. Peter, St. James, and St. John. St. Peter rebukes the covetousness of the popes that succeeded to his chair.

Beatrice now accompanies Dante into the ninth heaven, where the Divine Essence is veiled from his view by nine hierarchies of angels. The celestial beauty of Beatrice in the empyrean, is pourtrayed by the poet with a fervour that clearly shows how deeply had struck the roots of his early love. Dazzled by the brilliancy around him, the poet bathes his eyelids in the

[1] "Poscia rivolei gli occhi agli occhi belli."

[2] "Pareami, che 'l suo vizo ardesse tutto:
Egli occhi ovea di letizia si pieni
Che passar mi convien senza costrutto."
Paradiso, Canto xxiii., v. 22.

waters of the river of light, flowing from the throne of God. Thus strengthened, for—

"There is in heaven a light, whose goodly shine
Makes the Creator visible to all
Created, that in seeing him alone
Have peace"—

he is enabled to gaze upon the glories of the empyrean. On millions of thrones sit the souls of the blest in circles never ending. Beatrice points out to him a vacant throne prepared for the Emperor Henry VII.[1]

Beatrice now leaves him to take her seat upon one of the thrones; she benignantly smiles upon him from her exalted station, then turns towards the fountain of eternal light.

St. Bernard points out to the poet the Virgin Mary on her throne, and the souls of the blessed, mentioned in the Old and New Testament. Dante finally beholds a glimpse of the great mystery, the hypostatical union of Christ's human nature with his Divine being, and has now arrived at the utmost boundaries of the gratification of human desire.

"Here vigour fail'd the towering fantasy;
And yet the will roll'd onward, like a wheel
In even motion, by the love impell'd,
That moves the sun in heaven and all the stars."

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[1] Dante compares the Empyrean to a snow-white rose, the leaves of which circle round the petals.

Such is a brief and imperfect outline of the immortal poem of Dante Alighieri, of whom Petrarch said, that in him the power was equal to the will, and whom he styles "the leader of the Italian dialect."[1] But it is in detail rather than in structure that the poem excels; there is scarcely a line that does not contain some classical allusion, or point out a noble moral.

The sensation created in Italy on the appearance of the "Divine Comedy" was immense. The people repeated extracts from "Il Libro," as it was styled, in the public streets and squares; it was in every man's mouth; the learned vied with each other in writing comments upon, and expounding it publicly to their fellow-citizens, as was the case at Florence, by Boccacio, at Bologna, by Benvenuta da Imola, and at Pisa, by Francesco da Buti.

"It was a wonderful sight," says Perticari, "to behold Giovanni Boccacio appointed by a public decree, expounding in the church of St. Stephen the "Divine Comedy," to a mixed audience of the personal friends and enemies of the poet, Guelphs and Ghibellines, sons and nephews of the men on whom he had poured out his

[1] "Il nostro duca del volgare eloquio."

censure, and whose swords were still stained with each other's blood."

Amongst the later commentators of Dante, Venturi, Valpi, and Lombardi, deserve a high place; but their name is legion. In endeavouring to embroider upon a canvas already filled up by men, contemporaries of Dante, more capable of appreciating his views, many have distorted the ideas of the poet, endeavouring to discover in a simple expression some great mystery, some hidden meaning which never was designed. Could Dante once again tread this earth, he would doubtless find a fitting place for these laborious triflers in one of the circles of the Inferno.[1]

Of English translators, the Reverend Henry Francis Cary, M.A., is unquestionably the first. After comparing the translation almost line for line with the original text, I have come to this conclusion. In the present essay, all the quotations from the "Divine Comedy," with one or two exceptions, are from Cary. He has, moreover, translated the whole poem,[2] whilst less laborious

[1] Professor Rossetti maintains that the poem constitutes a conventional language, or "gergo," of which, he says, there is evidence in the works of all the Ghibelline writers of that age.

[2] I must not omit to mention a translation of the entire poem by Mr. Ichabod Wright, which is executed with great spirit and ability.

students of Italian literature have selected only the more striking passages. The translation of Dante's poems in the "Vita Nuova" and the "Convito," by the late Charles Lyell, Esq., are masterpieces.[1] Mr. Carlyle's prose translation will prove of inestimable value to the student who desires to make himself acquainted with the language. Many other English translators of portions of Dante are favourably known; by Mr. Charles Rogers (1782); Rev. Henry Boyd (1785); Mr. Nathaniel Howard (1807); Mr. Joshua Hume (1812); Mr. Edward Fox (1836); the Rev. John Dayman (1843), and by Mr. Austen.

The United States boast a translation of the first ten cantos by W. D. Ticknor, and there are, doubtless, more by other hands, whose names have escaped, or have not reached me.

The Germans have many excellent translations, their rich language being well suited to the subject. A. W. Schlegel commenced a metrical translation, but never finished it. The portion he had executed was published in Schiller's periodical, the "Horen." Kannegiesser published a translation in 1814, which has gone through four editions; while a translation by

[1] I have made use of Lyell's translation.

Streckfurs (1827), has reached its third edition. Under the name of "Philalethes," Prince John of Saxony published a translation in 1839.

The French translations are very unsatisfactory, the language not being suited to the subject.

CHAPTER IV.

Other Italian poets.—Cecco d' Ascoli.—Fazia degli Uberti.—Francesco da Barbarino.—Cino di Pistoja.

THE fame of Dante's poem developed the taste for poetry in Italy; but the works of the many writers of that century who endeavoured to pursue the same track, with few exceptions, have gone to the grave with their authors. The names of Guido Novello da Polenta, of Burone da Gubbio (Dante's friend), of Benucci Salimbeni, and Bindo Bonichi are honourably mentioned by Tiraboschi, and other Italian historians. There are four, more deserving of notice.

Cecco d'Ascoli (so called after his native city, his real name being Francesco Staboli), had the unenviable fate of being burned alive by order of the Inquisition. He was for some time Professor of Astrology at the University of Bologna, and is the author of a work on that occult science.[1] He was burnt at the stake in

[1] "Maestro Cecco da Ascoli leggeva Astrologia cer salario di cento lire."—*Tiraboschi,* Pol. v., p. 47.

one of the public squares of Florence in the year 1327; according to Villani, for having written a treatise to prove the existence of evil spirits in the upper regions of the air, which, by certain invocations, could be made to appear and perform miraculous things. Tiraboschi, on the other hand, attributes his death to the jealousy of a certain Dino del Garbo, a celebrated physician of that day, as also to his having created himself many enemies by calumniating Dante and Guido Cavalcanti in a poem entitled "Acerba." This poem was written in *seste rime*, and acquired some celebrity.

Bonifazio, or Fazio degli Uberti, nephew of the celebrated Ghibelline leader, Farinata degli Uberti, acquired some fame by a poem in six Cantos, in *terza rima*, entitled "Il Dittamondo" (*dicta mundi*). Choosing Solon for his guide, as Dante had taken Virgil, the poet wanders over the world, rendering in verse an account of all he beholds. He is reputed one of the best poets of the fourteenth century, so far as energy and fluency of style are concerned. Various editions of the Dittamondo have been published; one in 1474, another in 1501, which was reprinted at Venice in 1821; but the best

edition is that which was published at Milan in 1826.

Francesco da Barberino received a laurel crown for his talents as a jurist. The dry study of the law did not deter him from devoting a portion of his time to poetry, of which he has left proofs in a work entitled "Documenti d'Amore."[1] This work is not, as its title would imply, a treatise on Love, but a discussion on Moral Philosophy, and is in twelve books, of which each book is devoted to some particular virtue. He is also the author of a poem on the customs of women.[2] He died of the plague in 1348, at the advanced age of eighty-four.

Cino di Pistoja occupies a distinguished place in the annals of Italian Literature. He was born at Pistoja in the year 1270; his father was Francesco dei Sinubaldi, or Sinibaldi, of an ancient and noble family. Cino is an abbreviation of Guittoncino. The only respectable professions open to young men of that day were the law and the army. Of fighting there was

[1] An edition of this work was published in Rome in 1640, by Federigo Ubaldini.

[2] "Del reggimento e de costumi delle donne, di Messer Francesco da Barberino, opera tratta dai codici della Vaticana e per la prima volta publicata dal Signor Guglielmo Manzi, Roma, 1825."

always enough and to spare, and the great progress made by jurisprudence in Italy in the fourteenth century is mainly to be attributed to the eternal quarrels between the popes and the emperors, who, when they could not make good their cause by the sword, had recourse to the courts of law and arbitration. Cino studied at Bologna, where he graduated. On his return to his native place, he found it the theatre of civil war. He sided with the Ghibellines, and after holding for some time the appointment of judge, he left Pistoja, whether banished, or as a voluntary exile, his historiographers have left undecided. They, however, concur in making him visit Paris somewhere between 1307, and 1310.

His poetical reputation, like that of Petrarch, is founded upon his sonnets in praise of his lady. On leaving his native city, Cino sought an asylum with Philip Perlisgezi, the leader of the Bianchi (Ghibellines), of Pistoja, who had withdrawn with his followers and family to the castle of Piteccio, a stronghold he possessed on the confines of Lombardy. Cino became enamoured of his friend's daughter, the beautiful Selvaggia, in praise of whose charms he devoted his muse, at one time celebrating her

beauty and her virtues, at another, bitterly complaining of her cruelty, and finally bewailing her death, which had caused him to relinquish all hope of ever being consoled for so great a loss. Like Dante's Beatrice, Petrarch's Laura, and Boccacio's Fiammetta, Cino's Selvaggia has been immortalised by her lover.

After the death of his mistress, Cino devoted himself to the study of the law. In the year 1314, he completed a work upon which his legal reputation rests,—"Comments upon the first nine books of Cocleo."[1] Different universities invited him to lecture at their colleges. From 1314 to 1334 he held lectures at the University of Perugia, from whence he proceeded for a similar purpose to Florence. Some historians state that he afterwards lectured at Bologna. This, however, is not satisfactorily proved; it is, consequently, doubtful whether Petrarch and Boccacio were among his pupils.[2] Doubts are likewise thrown upon the authenticity of the letter said to have been written by Cino to Petrarch, reproaching him for having abandoned the study of the law for poetry, as also upon the supposed reply of Petrarch.

[1] Published at Frankfort in 1578.—Tiraboschi.

[2] Petrarch was born in 1304; Boccacio in 1313.

In the year 1336 he returned to his native city, where he breathed his last towards the end of the year, or early in 1337. His obsequies were celebrated with great pomp in the cathedral of Pistoja, where there is a fine monument by Andrea Pisano to his memory.

Petrarch bewailed the death of Cino in the following beautiful lines :—

"Piangete, donne, e con voi pianga Amore;
Piangete, amanti, per ciascun paese;
Poi che morto è colui, che tutto intese
In farvi mentre visse, onore.

"Io per me prego il mio acerbo dolore
Non sian da lui le lagrime contese
E mi sia di Sospir tanto cortese
Quanto bisogna a disfogare il core.

"Piangon le rime ancor, piangono i versi;
Perchè 'l nostro amoroso Messer Cino
Novellamente s'è da noi partito.
Pianga, Pistoja, e i cittadiu perversi
Che perdut' hanno si dolce vicino;
E rallegres' il cielo, ov 'ello è gito." [1]

Dante, in his work "De volgare eloquio," pays a high tribute of respect to Cino, whom

[1] We subjoin a translation, which may supply some idea of the original :—

"Weep, damsels, and let Love your sorrow share,
Lovers in countries far and near lament;
For he is gone who whilst to mortals lent,
Knew how to honour love in verses rare.

he praises for having beautified the vulgar tongue, by weeding out many coarse expressions, simplifying its construction, and generally improving it.

For mine own part, I shall not stint or spare
  My streaming tears and sighs, that must have vent
  To ease my heart, alas! how nearly rent,
By the great sorrow which is planted there.

Lament, ye rhymes, once more; ye verses, mourn,
  For our love-breathing Messer Cino's death;
Pistoja, weep for him so lately torn
  From you, and citizens of fickle breath,
Bewail so sweet, so dear a neighbour dead:—
Let Heaven rejoice, whereto his soul has fled.

CHAPTER V.

Petrarch.—His pretensions to fame.—Biographical sketch.—He has a narrow escape from drowning.—Petrarch's description of his youth. —Clement V. transfers the Papal Court to Avignon.—Jean Andrea. —Petrarch's love of old manuscripts.—His disgust for the study of the law.—His father burns his cherished manuscripts.—Death of his parents.—Pope John XXII.—Petrarch and his brother take orders.—His love for Laura.—Jacopo Colonna.—Historical sketch of the state of Europe at this period.—Daring feat of Jacopo Colonna.—Petrarch's friendship for him.—Cardinal Colonna.— Richard de Bury envoy of Edward III. of England.—Old Stephen Colonna.—Invasion of Italy by John, king of Bohemia, assisted by France.—Petrarch's indignation.—Petrarch visits Paris.—Feuds of the Colonna and Orsini.—The Crusades.—Pope Benedict XII.— Petrarch's appeal to the Pope to return to Rome.—He is made Canon of Lombès.—Illicit love of Petrarch.—His children.—Petrarch visits Rome.—Reported visit to England.—His first visit to Vaucluse.— Description of Vaucluse.—The 23rd August, 1340.—Rome and Paris offer him the poet's crown.—Petrarch visits Naples and is examined by King Robert.—Petrarch is crowned in the Capitol on the 8th April, 1341.—His extraordinary dream.—He is made Archdeacon of Parma.—Pope Clement VI.—The Romans send an embassy to the Pope.—Petrarch and Rienzi.—State of Europe in 1343.—The Pope sends Petrarch as Ambassador to Naples.—The Grand Company. —Duke Werner.—Petrarch bewails the fate of Italy.—Ode to Italy.

WITH the exception of Dante, no man can be entitled to so high a place in the annals of Italian literature as Francesco Petrarca. It is not as the lover of Laura, as the elegant and tender poet, but as one who devoted his time to deep researches and investigations for the improvement of the language of his country, that

such a claim can be advanced in his behalf.[1] Laura was the source of those tender lays that thrilled through Italy, and vibrated throughout Europe; but Italy, a nobler mistress, exercised a power over his thoughts which brought into play the machinery of a mind rarely equalled. As by the touch of a magic wand, the effeminate and voluptuous language of the love-sick poet was exchanged for the manly tones of the orator and the patriot. We behold him, with the language of a Demosthenes or a Cicero, exhorting the Princes of Italy to bid a truce to their private feuds, and to unite their forces against a common enemy. Rome, the mother of Christendom, the Imperial City of the Cæsars, was the centre round which his thoughts revolved with the most intense love and devotion. His letters to Cola Rienzi, and his exhortations to the popes, who had transferred the Papal See to Avignon, to return to Rome, are so many extant and

[1] "The language and poetry of Tuscany are more especially indebted to Petrarch; he was, moreover, a statesman, a good negotiator, and deep politician; the most renowned princes of the age he lived in entrusted him with the most delicate negotiations, and courted his counsel and his advice in their most important affairs."—*De Sade, Mém. pour la Vie de Petr.*

"The prodigious labours of Petrarch to promote the study of ancient literature, are, after all, his noblest title to glory"—*Sismondi.*

patent testimonials of the love he entertained for his country.

Francesco Petrarca was born on Monday, 20th July, 1304, at Arezzo, in Tuscany. Petrarch is his own biographer. "In the year 1304," he writes, "on the 20th day of July, towards day-break, I was born in the town of Arezzo, in the so-called faubourg del' Orto. I was born an exile, of honest parents, of Florentine origin, of mediocre and fallen fortunes, even to poverty, driven out of their native city."[1] His father Petracco, or Petraccolo, was a notary at Florence. His mother's name was Eletta Canigiani. Petracco was banished from Florence in the same year as Dante (1302), in whose company he left that city for Arezzo. "I knew Dante," says Petrarch, "when I was quite a child. He was staying with my grandfather and my father. He was younger than the former, but older than the latter. They were banished together from Florence."[2]

When Petrarch was seven months old, his mother Eletta took him to a small property her husband possessed at Ancisa, some fourteen miles from Florence. On this journey he had a narrow escape from drowning. Whilst fording

[1] Petr. *Epist. ad Posteros.* [2] Petr. *Famil. Lit.* xii.

the Arno, the horse of the servant who carried the child lost its footing, and man, horse, and child were precipitated into the stream, and with difficulty saved. Petrarch remained till his seventh year at Ancisa, when he went to Pisa, and subsequently to Avignon. He thus describes the years of his youth: "At Arezzo, where I first saw the light, I remained nearly the first year of my life; the six following years were passed at Ancisa, at a country house belonging to my father, about fourteen miles from Florence, my mother having been recalled from exile; the eighth year of my life was passed in transalpine Gaul, on the left bank of the Rhone, at Avignon, where the Roman Pontiff keeps in a prolonged exile the Church of Christ. There, on the banks of that most winding river, I spent my boyhood, under the care of my parents. I lived four years at Carpentrazeo, a small town no great distance from Avignon. At those two places I learnt as much grammar and rhetoric as was then taught in the schools. I thence proceeded to Montpellier to study the law. There I remained four years. From that city I visited Bologna, where I remained three years, keeping the regular terms of civil law, and, in the opinion of some, I was making good

progress. But as soon as I became my own master, I relinquished that study, not because I had a dislike to the authority of the law, which doubtless is great and rich in the ancient learning of Rome, but because the laws are often abused and perverted by evil-minded men. I learned that which I should not have liked to turn to dishonest account, and to have made an honest use of it would have been a difficult task; and, had I done so, my honesty would have been attributed to ignorance. Most men study the laws, either that they may be enabled to elude them themselves, or to teach others how to violate them with impunity. Moreover, it was utterly hopeless to make an honest use of them in a city where virtue and innocence were turned into ridicule."

Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux, elected pope in 1305, as Clement V., had transferred the Papal See to Avignon, where a licentious and voluptuous court made that city a sink of iniquity.[1]

At Bologna, Petrarch studied under the cele-

[1] Petrarch thus apostrophises Avignon: "Infernus viventium, sentina profundissima vitiorum, probrum ingens, fœtor ultimus orbis terræ." And again he says: "Non tam propter se quam propter concursantes et coactas ibi concretasque orbis sordes ac nequitias, hic locus a principio multis atque ante alios mihi pessimus omnium virus est."

brated Jean André, or Giovanni Andrea.[1] It was here also that he made the acquaintance of Cino di Pistoja and Cecco d' Ascoli. His younger brother Gerard, and a friend, Gui Settimo,[2] accompanied him to Bologna. Instead of devoting himself to law parchments, Petrarch spent his time in poring over all the old manuscripts of the ancient classics he could lay his hands upon. His father being informed of this, hastened to Bologna to endeavour to remedy what he esteemed a great evil. Petrarch's suspicions were aroused by the sudden appearance of his father, and he lost no time in secreting his cherished manuscripts. Old Petracco found out their place of concealment, and piled them up

[1] Giovanni Andrea. According to Tiraboschi—"Il più celebre canonista non solo di questo secolo, ma farsè ancor d'ogni tempo."—(Vol. v., p. 303.)

His daughter, Novella, was so well instructed by her father, that, at times, she used to lecture in his stead. On those occasions, she sat behind a small curtain, that the attention of the students might not be attracted by her great beauty. The following curious account is in the manuscript of Christina da Pizzano, entitled "La Cité des Dames."

"Jean André solempnel legiste à Boulogne-la-grasse, n'estoit pas d'opinion que mal fust que femmes fassent lettrées. Quand à sa belle et bonne fille, qu' il tant ama, qui est nom Nouvelle, fist apprendre lettres, et si avant la Loix, que quand il estoit occupé d'aucune essoine, parquoy il ne pouvait vacquer à lire les leçons a ses escholieres, il envoya Nouvelle sa fille lire en son lieu aux escholes en chayere. Et afin que la biauté d'icelle n'empechast la pensée des oyans, elle avait un petit courtine au devant d'elle," &c., &c.—*Vide* Tiraboschi, vol. v., p. 311.

[2] Afterwards Archbishop of Genoa.

and set fire to them. The exclamations of grief of his son, who entered the room where this literary *auto-da-fè* was being held, induced the old man to withdraw, at the risk of burning his fingers, such of the manuscripts as had been spared by the flames. This mark of paternal affection touched Petrarch, and, for a time, he endeavoured to comply with the wishes of his father. But nature was not to be overcome, and he returned with renewed ardour to his literary pursuits.[1]

The society of such men as Cino di Pistoja and Cecco d' Ascali nourished the poetical tendencies of his mind. On his return from an excursion which he had made from Bologna to Venice, he learnt the death of his mother (1325). Petracco only survived Eletta one year. On the receipt of this last intelligence, Petrarch and his brother Gerard quitted Bologna for Avignon, to take possession of whatever property might have been left to them. The two brothers found on their arrival, that they had been defrauded of their small patrimony by roguish executors, and it became imperatively necessary for them to take some decided step towards procuring an honourable maintenance.

[1] "Valdè parentibus cupiebam obsequi; sed natura cogebat ..... frustrà naturæ repugnatur."

Clement V., who died on the 20th April, 1314, was succeeded by John XXII., who held a brilliant court at Avignon. The Church then was regarded as a profession for gentlemen who desired to be attached to the Court, not so much with a view to clerical preferment as to gain admittance into good society. Both brothers took holy orders, and submitted to the tonsure. Petrarch was then in his twenty-second year. Of elegant manners and handsome person, he was courted for his talents, and was readily admitted into the best circles. His love of study alone saved him from being whirled away in the current of the most dissipated Court in Europe. Yet, for a time, Petrarch was a clerical dandy—we have his own word for it—the greater part of the morning being devoted to his hairdresser.[1]

On the 6th April, 1327, the Monday in Holy

[1] Many years later, in a letter to his brother Gerard, who, on the death of a lady to whom he was deeply attached, retired from society and became prior of a monastery, there is the following passage: "Thou wilt remember how careful we were then about our apparel; what trouble we took in dressing morning and evening; what anxiety lest our hair should get out of order or be disarranged by the wind; how we dreaded a crowd, lest the folds of our robes should be displaced. And what shall I say as to our shoes?—how they tortured our feet instead of covering them! For my part, I confess that I should have lost the use of them altogether, if I had not finally preferred slightly offending the eyesight of others, to the destruction of sinews and tendons."

Week was a memorable day in the life of Petrarch. He was attending matins at the church of St. Clara, at Avignon, at six in the morning, when he was forcibly struck by the beauty of a young lady performing her orisons. She was attired in a green silk dress, embroidered with violets. Petrarch mentions the date in two of his sonnets.

"Era 'l giorno ch' al Sol si scolaro
Per la pietà del suo Fattore i rai:
Quand i fui preso, e non me ne guardai,
Che i be' vostri occhi, donna mi legaro," &c.[1]

The precise date is mentioned more satisfactorily in another sonnet, where he says,—

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[1] "When with faint radiance shone the pitying sun,
It 's maker's cruel sufferings to survey;
Then, then you stole my heedless heart away!
Then by those eyes, bright maid, was I undone!"

It would appear from this that Petrarch saw Laura for the first time on a Good Friday; whereas astronomical calculations prove that the 6th of April, 1327, was on a Monday; Easter Sunday falling that year on the 12th of April. Here, then, a seeming contradiction arises, which is thus cleared up: our poet did not mean to specify the day on which the Holy Church celebrates the Passion, but the day on which our Saviour was really crucified. Now, reckoning, as the Jews do, by the moon, we find that the 15th of the moon of March, the very day on which he was crucified, corresponds with the Holy Monday of the moon of March. The real day of the Crucifixion readily struck Petrarch; there being, in his time, a synagogue at Avignon, where Easter was celebrated every 14th of the moon of March. Some have wrongfully supposed that an eclipse happened the day that Petrarch first saw Laura."—*Note to an anonymous translation of some of Petrarch's sonnets.*

"Mille trecento ventisette appunto
Su l'ora prima, il di sesto d'Aprile
Nel Labirinto entrai," &c.[1]

The name of this lady was Laura, and she was the daughter of Audibert de Noves, knight and syndic of Avignon. She was born in the year 1308, and was married in 1325 to Hugo, son of Paul de Sade. The young lady was consequently nineteen years of age when Petrarch fell in love with her, and four years his junior.[2]

If the history of Petrarch's love for Laura is faithfully depicted in his sonnets, we can come to no other conclusion than that it was purely platonic. Laura never allowed her lover to out-

[1] "It was in the year 1327, at the first hour, on the sixth day of April, that I entered the labyrinth," &c. [The Italians reckon the hours from sunrise.]

[2] The "Pièces Justificatives" annexed to De Sade's admirable work, "Mémoires pour la Vie de Pétrarque," will convince most readers of the accuracy of the learned Abbé's statements, respecting the lineage of Laura and her marriage with his ancestor.

Tiraboschi, who never loses an occasion of refuting De Sade, when he thinks the latter is at fault, thus speaks of the Memoirs:

"A diligent perusal of all Petrarch's writings, especially his letters, edited and unedited (which latter are numerous), a laborious examination of all the authors and libraries that held out the hope of a ray of light upon the subject, an attentive study of the works of Petrarch's contemporaries, a judicious investigation of all the authors who have written the life of Petrarch, and, finally, an indefatigable research for many years, have procured us from this learned [*erudito*] writer the most ample history that ever has been written, not only of Petrarch, but of that entire century."— *Vide* Tirab. Preface to vol. v., *Storia della Lit. Ital.*

step the limits of respect, yet, flattered by his attentions, she was sufficiently condescending to keep alive the sentiment she had inspired.[1]

At Avignon Petrarch made the acquaintance —which ripened into lasting friendship—of Jacopo Colonna, an illustrious scion of that noble house. He had just been created Bishop of Lombès by the Pope, as a reward for his services against the Emperor Louis.[2] The bishop invited Petrarch to accompany him to his diocese, an invitation which was gladly accepted. This visit took place in 1330. Petrarch remained at Lombès the whole of the summer and part of the autumn. He returned to Avignon with the bishop, who introduced him to his brother, Cardinal Colonna, a great patron of the fine arts, whose palace was the rendezvous of men of letters from every country. The graceful manners and elegant conversation of Petrarch won the heart of the cardinal, who offered him apartments in his palace.[3]

In the society of those two eminent men, and in that of their guests, Petrarch enlarged his

[1] *Vide* Ugo Foscolo's interesting essay on the Love of Petrarch.

[2] *Vide* Appendix.

[3] "Inde rediens sub fratre ejus Cardinali multos per annos non quasi sub dominio, sed sub patre, sed cum fratre amantissimo, imo mecum, et propriâ meâ in domo fui."—Petr. *Lett. ad Post.*

ideas and acquired that store of information with which he has enriched his works. It was at the conversazioni of Cardinal Colonna that Petrarch made the acquaintance of the learned envoy of Edward III. of England, Richard de Bury.[1] With him he kept up a correspondence. These letters of Petrarch doubtless exist in some library in England.

In 1331, old Stephen Colonna, the undaunted and inveterate enemy of Pope Boniface VIII., arrived at Avignon, on a visit to his son, the cardinal. Petrarch's respect and admiration of the veteran warrior were unbounded. Many of his sonnets were written in his honour.

[1] In Rymer, vol. ii., p, 59, there is a letter from Edward III. to the Pope, recommending his emissaries, Richard de Bury, and Anthony de Pesaigues. It is dated 15th Oct., 1331. The object of this mission was to justify Edward with the Pope for having imprisoned his mother Isabella, and her favourite Mortimer. The first visit of Richard de Bury to Avignon was of short duration; but he returned on some important mission in 1333. Rymer publishes a letter from Edward to the Pope's nephew, dated 13th February, 1333, recommending to his and the Pope's good graces, Richard de Bury, his clerk and secretary, and John of Sorditch, Knight.

Richard de Bury, on his return from this mission, was created Bishop of Durham (19th Dec., 1333). He was afterwards made Lord High Treasurer, and in 1338 he was sent as plenipotentiary to Arras, to settle the terms of the treaty of peace with France. He collected a fine library, and is the author of a work entitled "Philobiblion," which was printed at Spire in 1483, at Pisa in 1500, and at Oxford in 1599. According to MSS. at Oxford, this work was finished in 1343. Richard de Bury died in 1345.

"Gloriosa Colonna, in cui s'appoggia
Nostra speranza, e'l gran nome Latino, &c."[1]

The love of Petrarch for Laura after his return from Lombès was more intense than ever. Many of his sonnets in her praise were written in this year. His reputation as a poet soon spread far and wide.

In the year 1330, John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, son of the Emperor Henry VII., invaded Italy. Coquetting with the Guelphs and Ghibellines, he cared for neither. The Italians fancied they beheld in him a deliverer, and the cities of Brescia, Bergamo, Cremona, Parma, Pavia, Reggio, and Modena, threw open their gates to receive him; but the intrigues of Louis of Bavaria, who excited disturbances in his Hungarian dominions, compelled him to return.

A formidable league was formed against him, headed by Robert, King of Naples. The King of Bohemia, whose daughter was married to the eldest son of Philip of Valois, King of France, solicited and obtained assistance from that monarch. In 1333 he re-entered Italy,

[1] "O glorious *column* upon which is built
Our Hope, and the great name of Latium."
A play upon the word *colonna*.

accompanied by the Lord High Constable of France, the Counts of Armagnac and De Forey, the Marshal de Mirepoix, and the flower of the French chivalry.[1]

The indignation of Petrarch at the invasion of the Gauls knew no bounds. An enthusiastic admirer of the grandeur of ancient Rome, he gave vent to his feelings in an epistle in Latin verse which found an echo in the breasts of his countrymen.[2]

He enumerates the glorious deeds of the Roman heroes, of Cæsar, Manlius Torquatus, Marcellus, and of Marius, who left the plough to chastise the insolence of the Gauls.

In 1333 Petrarch visited Paris, from which city he corresponded with Cardinal Colonna.

[1] The French army, under Armagnac and Mirepoix, was defeated before Ferrara on the 14th April, 1333. The Count d'Armagnac, and many valiant knights, were either made prisoners, or fell on the field of battle. The King of Bohemia, after making the best terms he could, returned to his own dominions.—*Vide* Sismondi, *Hist. des Rep. Italiennes*, vol. iv., p. 94.

[2] This epistle, which consists of 176 Latin hexameters, was written to his friend Æneas of Sienna, a Dominican friar and a learned scholar. It is published in most editions of his works, and commences :—

"Per juga Parnassi scandentem summa videbis,
Aeneam, missamque feres sibi jussa salutem,
Post gravidum gemitu narrabis epistola carmen."—

Petrarch, *Epistolarum*, lib. i., ep. iii.—*Basle Edition*, "*Opera quæ exstant omnia*," p. 1332.

The narrow and dirty streets of the French capital greatly astonished him. Writing to the cardinal, he says, "With the exception of Avignon, I never saw a place that smelt so badly."[1] But Avignon was Petrarch's *bête-noire.* He returned through Flanders, and expressed great disgust at not finding any good ink at Ghent, to copy some old manuscripts. On reaching Lyons, he heard that his friend the Bishop of Lombès had left Avignon for Rome. This grieved him much, as the bishop had promised to take him with him, and his heart yearned towards the imperial city.

At this time Rome was a prey to civil strife. In the absence of both pope and emperor, the two rival houses of the Colonna and the Orsini contended for the government.[2] The feud was embittered by the death of two of the Orsini, one of whom fell by the hand of Stephen Colonna the younger. The presence at Rome of the Bishop of Lombès to assist his kinsmen by his counsel and experience was thought advisable. One of Petrarch's sonnets was written in honour of this victory over the

[1] "Olentiorem nullum vidi, una excipitur Avenis."

[2] "Pontificis absentiâ Romani proceres laxatis licentiæ habenis; Ursini præcipui et Columnenses atroci inter se bello certabant."

Orsini, and is dedicated to Stephen Colonna the younger :—

"Vinse Annibal 'e non seppe usar poi
Ben la vittoriosa sua ventura
Però, signor mio caro, aggiate curor
Che similmente non avenga a voi.
L'Orsa rabbiasor per gli orsacchi suoi
Che trovaron di Maggio aspra pastura,
Rodè se dentro, e i denti e l'ung hie indura
Per vindicar i suoi danni sopra noi.[1]"

The Pope's legate in Italy, Cardinal Gaetano, was a near relative of the Orsini. He unwarrantably made use of the troops in the service of the Church to avenge a family quarrel. Having destroyed the castle of Giovi, belonging to the Colonna, he entered Rome, and laid formal siege to the quarter of the city inhabited by the Colonna, now once more commanded by old Stephen. But the Pope reprimanded the legate, who withdrew his troops.

[1] If Hannibal could gain a battle, yet
He could not turn to profit victory ;
Therefore, dear Signor, keep a wary eye
That you encounter not what erst he met.
Wroth to have lost her cubs, who came to get
May's bitter herbage, doth the she-bear * nigh
Madden, and in revenge on us to fly,
She points her tusks, and her fell claws doth whet.

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* The she-bear is suggested by the family name Orsini. In "on us" (sopra noi), Petrarch identifies himself with the Colonna.

On his arrival at Avignon, Petrarch found the Pope, then in his ninetieth year, occupied with two great projects—a new crusade, and the re-establishment of the Papal See at Rome. In a consistory, held on the 26th of July, 1333, Philip of Valois received the Pope's benediction as leader of the new crusade, on his oath to provide an army of 30,000 men, and 20,000 horses for the expedition. The kings of Bohemia, of Arragon, and Navarre, took the cross, with a great number of nobles of every degree. Petrarch wrote various odes and sonnets in honour of the crusade,[1] which, however, never took place: wars in Europe put a stop to the expedition.

On the 4th of December, 1334, Pope John XXII. died of old age, after a reign of eighteen years.

The election of a new pope was the signal for fresh brawls in the Church; the result was, that the votes of the majority fell unwittingly upon Cardinal Fournier, a person but ill-suited for so high an office. If we are to credit the historians of the day, the good man, in the plenitude of

[1] For instance, the Ode commencing—

"O aspettata in Ciel, beata e bella," &c.

Also the sonnet commencing—

"Il Successor di Carlo che la chioma," &c.

his astonishment, exclaimed, "Reverend fathers, your choice has fallen upon an ass!"[1] He was elected pope, as Benedict XII., on the 20th of December, 1334.

Ambassadors arrived at Avignon from Rome, to implore the new pontiff to restore the Papal See to the Eternal City. They found a warm advocate in Petrarch, who addressed a remarkable letter in Latin verse to Benedict: he represents Rome as a forsaken wife, who thus addresses the head of the Church:—

"Oh you, who behold prostrate at your feet all the nations of the earth, deign to cast a glance upon an unfortunate woman who embraces the knees of her lord and husband. If I were still in the bright days of my youth, when accompanied everywhere by my two husbands,[2] respect was shown to me by the most mighty princes, I should not have found it necessary to declare my name—it would have been written on my brow. Disfigured now by grief, old age, and misery, I am obliged to proclaim it.

[1] *Vide* Sismondi, *Rep. Ital.*, vol. iv., p. 107. Fleury, *Hist. Eccles.*

[2] The Pope and the Emperor.

"Forma faret, roseusque color, si pectore sanguis,
Fervidus, ant sponsis irem comitata duobus."

Bened. xii., *Pont. Rom. S.*

"I am Rome, that queen of the world, whose fame has spread far and wide. Can you discover any traces of my past beauty? My trembling voice and tottering steps betoken decay and decrepitude; but it is not so much time, as grief at your absence, that has reduced me to my present state. Italy counts many cities of more ancient origin, yet less furrowed than myself—Mantua, Padua, Pisa, Tivoli, Palæstrina, and others. When I think of my past triumphs, of powerful kings yoked to my chariot, of barbarous nations vanquished and subjugated, the universe at my feet—recollection renders my grief still more poignant."

Petrarch concludes with the expression of a hope that the Pope will shortly leave Avignon.

"But what do I say? A happy presentiment warns me of your speedy return; all my sisters are preparing to receive you; I fear lest Genoa, Piacenza, Bologna, Florence, and the other cities on the road may detain you, and deprive me of the joy of your return.[1] Remember I am your

[1] "Sed quia perpetuus mentem timor angit amantis
Admoneo metuensque precor ne nostra per urbes
Gaudia distuleris rebus distractus amœnis
Janua nam quamvis primus in finibus astans
Limine te excipiat placeatque Placentia forsan," &c., &c.

This letter to Benedict consists of 226 hexameters.—*Vide* Epist., ii.; lib. i. *Basle Edition*, "*Opera quæ exstant omnes.*"

spouse ; hasten, then, to accede to my ardent wishes, and assure yourself that your presence will restore me to my pristine beauty."

The eloquence of Petrarch, and the presence of the Roman ambassadors, were not without effect upon Benedict : he sent emissaries to Bologna to prepare a palace for his reception on his way to Rome ; but the reports of those agents, as to the unsettled state of Italy, induced him to alter his determination, and to fix his residence definitively at Avignon. He gave orders for the erection of a splendid palace, an example soon followed by the cardinals. The high towers of Avignon, built at that period, are objects of curiosity to the modern traveller.

Great was Petrarch's sorrow and indignation on this decision by the Pope. In verse and prose he declaimed against the—

"Torri superbe al ciel nemiche."

In this year (1335) the canonry of Lombès was conferred upon Petrarch by the Pope.

The ideal love of Petrarch for Laura burnt as brightly as ever. He continued to indite sonnet after sonnet in celebration of her ; yet whilst devoting his pen to a Platonic attachment, Petrarch was paying his addresses to a lady at

Avignon, less rigid than Laura. By this lady, whose name he has carefully concealed, Petrarch had two illegitimate children; a son, Giovanni, born in 1337, who lived to the age of four-and-twenty, and a daughter, Francesca, married afterwards to Francesco da Brossano.[1]

An invitation of the Bishop of Lombès, determined Petrarch to visit Rome. This was in 1337. He embarked at Marseilles, and landed safely at Civita Vecchia.

To reach Rome at this period was no easy task; armed bands of the Orsini continually scouring the Campagna. Petrarch sought a refuge in the castle of Capranica, where he met with a hearty welcome from Orso, Count of Anguillara, who had married Agnes the sister of the Bishop of Lombès. The chivalrous bishop, on hearing of Petrarch's arrival at Capranica, left Rome at the head of one hundred horsemen, and escorted his friend to the imperial city.

One of the most ardent wishes of Petrarch was now granted—he beheld Rome, the cherished spot of his affections; he trod on her hallowed ground; he wandered through her glorious ruins; and whilst his mind revelled in her past glories, his pulse beat quick with hopes of her regeneration.

[1] *Vide* De Sade's *Mémoires.*

Petrarch was treated as one of the family, by the Colonna, of whom Stephen held the high office of senator, conjointly with Paul Annibaldi. From Rome the poet addressed another letter to the Pope, exhorting him to visit his capital.[1]

Petrarch returned to Avignon on the 16th of August, after a cruize along the coasts of Spain and England.[2] The sight of Laura revived his love, and he resolved to quit Avignon for some secluded spot; accordingly he selected Vaucluse, a name now inseparably linked with that of Petrarch.[3] The valley of Vaucluse is in the shape of a horse-shoe, hemmed in on every side by high rocks; its verdant meadows are watered by the Sorgue. At the foot of one of the masses of rock there is a natural cavern, divided into two compartments, the outer some sixty feet in elevation, the inner about thirty. In the centre there is a basin of water, the source of the river Sorgue; this basin is reported to be unfathomable, and without any apparent bubbling or

[1] "Exul inops," &c., *Epist.* lib. i., Ep. iii.

[2] "Ex ipsis Britannici oceani littoribus."—Petr. *Ep. ad fam.*

[3] Româ reversus cum omnium sed in primis illius tædiosissimæ urbis fastidium atque odium ferre non possem, diverticulum aliquod quasi portum quærens, reperi vallem perexiguam sed solitariam atque amœnam, quæ Clausa dicitur, quindecin passuum millibus ab Asenione distantem, ubi fontium rex omnium Sorga oritur."—Petr. *Ep. ad post.*

commotion supplies water to the river, which is navigable at its source. The river runs into the Rhone near Avignon; in the valley itself, in the vicinity of the cavern, the stream forms innumerable cascades.

Petrarch bought a small cottage, and with no other attendance than that of a worthy fisherman and his wife, he relinquished himself to his meditations. If we are to credit his own words, solitude increased his love, which reached a point bordering on madness; but allowances must be made for poetical effusions, although, we confess, it is in this case rather difficult to do so. "In the middle of the night," he says, "I beheld Laura enter through the door of my chamber, approach my bed-side, and demand back her slave: a chill came over me, the blood in my veins rushed back to my heart, and I am sure that if a person had approached me with a light, he would have found me pale as a corpse, with terror impressed upon my features. I arose trembling before daylight, and rushing out of the house, I climbed the highest rocks; I struck into the woods, looking fearfully around me, expecting to behold the image that haunted me at night. I shall not be credited—but what I say is true—when seated alone I have seen her step forth from the

trunk of a tree, from the hollow of a rock, from a cloud; fear at such moments nailed me to the spot, and I knew not where to go."[1]

It was at Vaucluse that Petrarch wrote the first books of his poem, "Africa," for which he was awarded the poet's crown in the capitol.[2] During his seclusion at Avignon, Petrarch kept up a correspondence with the Bishop of Lombès, and his more intimate acquaintances, through whose medium his poetical compositions were circulated throughout Italy.

The sun which rose on the 23rd of August, 1340, ushered in one of the proudest days of the poet's existence. Early on the morning of that day, a courier arrived at the door of his humble dwelling at Vaucluse, the bearer of a letter from the Roman Senate, containing a pressing invitation to him to proceed to Rome, that he might receive the poet's crown in the Capitol. On the same day, towards evening, another courier presented himself with a letter

[1] "Io l'ho più volte (orchisia che me creda)
Nell acqua chiara e sopra l'erba verde
Veduta viva, e nel troncon d'un faggio," &c.
Petrarch, *Sonnets.*

[2] "Montibus illis vagantis cogitatio incidit et valida, ut de Scipione Africano illo primo cujus nomen mirum unde mihi a primâ ætate carum fuit, poeticum aliquid heroico carmine scriberem."—Petr. *Ep. ad post.*

from Robert de Bardi, Chancellor of the University of Paris, offering him a similar honour at the French capital.

Petrarch was in doubt for the moment which of the two honours he should accept. At Paris, no poet had ever been crowned; but, on the other hand, the Roman capitol was the hallowed spot of poetic glory. A letter from Cardinal Colonna confirmed his selection of the latter.[1] In a letter to his friend, the Bishop of Lombès, he expresses himself fully on the subject of the proposed honour. (The Bishop had returned to his diocese.) "I am going," he writes, "to Rome to a ceremony where I desire you, who are all my glory, to be present, and lo! you are far away in Gascony; but if not present in body, I wish you at least to be so in mind. Learn, then, that I am going to that city to have the Delphic crown placed upon my brow, a crown which was once the guerdon desired by poets and conquerors, but which is now either forgotten or despised. You know how eagerly I have desired it. Two great cities have offered it to me: Rome, the capital of the world, and the queen of cities, Paris, the cradle of learning.

[1] "De Laureâ sumendâ Consultatoriæ Epistolæ."—Petr. *Opera*, Lib. iii.

After mature deliberation I have followed the advice of your brother the cardinal, and I start this day to receive the crown upon the ashes of those great men, the pride of Rome, on the same theatre where they shone by their exploits. I shall first proceed to Naples, to pay my respects to King Robert of Naples, and I believe the ceremony will take place in the capitol, on the 8th of April. You will, perhaps, ask me, 'wherefore this ardour, this labour, this fatigue? To what will it all lead? Is your aim to become more wise, more virtuous? No! that crown will serve only to point you out as a spectacle to the public, and expose you to the shafts of envy. Are science and virtue birds that need twigs to build their nests with? What use will you make of those leaves of laurel that are to wreathe your brow?' To all these questions I shall content myself with the reply of the most wise of the Hebrews—'Vanity of vanities, everything is vanity!' Such is man. Fare you well, and judge me favourably." (This letter is dated the 16th of February, 1341.)

Petrarch arrived at Naples in the middle of March. He had previously written to King Robert of Naples, who was a great patron of literature and the arts, saying that he wished

to submit to an examination at his hands before receiving the laurel,—a step which partook of adulation, and which was scarcely complimentary to Rome. The good king prized the compliment. His reception of the poet was princely; and the outward form of an examination, which lasted three days, was gone through when, in the midst of his assembled court, the king proclaimed Petrarch worthy of the poet's crown.[1] He wished to confer it upon him with his own hands at Naples; but Petrarch's soul was hurrying on before him towards Rome. An old man, and unable to bear the fatigues of so long a journey, the king commissioned Giovanni Barili, his Chancellor, to represent him on the occasion.

When Petrarch took leave of him, the king stripped off his royal mantle, and placed it upon the shoulders of the poet, requesting him to wear it on the day of his coronation. At the same time he appointed him honorary almoner to his court. As a mark of his gratitude, Petrarch dedicated his poem, "Africa," to him.[2]

[1] "Certum deputavit diem, et a meridie ad vesperam me tenuit, et quoniam crescente materiâ breve tempus apparuit duabus proximis diebus idem fecit. Sic triduo excussâ ignorantiâ meâ, die tertio me dignum laureâ judicavit."—Petr. *ad post.*

[2] Robert, King of Naples, son of Charles II. and grandson of Charles I., was the third king of Naples of the House of Anjou. He

On Easter-day, the 8th of April, 1341, Petrarch was solemnly crowned in the capitol, by Orso, Count of Anguillara, amidst the shouts of "Viva il poeta! viva il campi doglio!" of an admiring people.

Early in the morning, the blast of trumpets heralded the event, and Rome sent forth her thousands, and her tens of thousands, to behold a ceremony which had so long fallen into disuse.[1] Preceded by twelve youths of tender age, selected from the noblest families, singing verses composed expressly for the occasion, Petrarch advanced on foot towards the capitol. Robed in the mantle given to him by the King of Naples, he was escorted by six of the principal citizens of Rome, dressed in green. There was a Conti, a Savelli, an Annibaldi, an Orsini, a Paparese, and a Montenero. Each of these nobles carried a wreath of flowers. Then came the senator, and the chief members of the council. The cortège being seated, a herald stepped forth, and called out aloud the name of Petrarch, who made a brief harangue.

was crowned at Avignon, in 1309 — the same year in which Clement V. established the Papal court there. Avignon was his property as Count of Provence. "He was," says Petrarch, "the only king of his age; for I only call him king who knows how to govern himself."

[1] No poet had been crowned since the reign of Theodosius.

Exclaiming three times, "Viva lo popolo romano, Viva lo senatore, Dio lo mantenga in libertade!" he knelt down before the senator, who, after a short address, took a crown of laurel from his own head, and placed it upon that of Petrarch, saying, "Corona premia la virtù!" Petrarch then recited a sonnet in honour of the past glories of Rome.[1] On resuming his seat, he was hailed with thunders of applause, and clapping of hands by the multitude, who rent the air with cries of "Viva il campidoglio ed il poeta!" When silence had been restored, Stephen Colonna enlarged upon the praises of Petrarch; and many of the spectators shed tears of admiration. Petrarch confesses that he blushed at the encomiums thus bestowed upon him, and at the applause of the people.[2]

The procession then left the capitol. The newly-crowned poet was borne in triumph to the church of St. Peter, where, after rendering thanks to the Almighty for the honour that had

[1] This sonnet is not published in his works.

[2] "Hinc Stephanus quo fœta virum jam tempore nostro
Majorem non Roma tulit, me laudibus amplis
Accumulat, rubor ora mihi mentemque premebat,
Indignum tales onerabant pectus honores
Mulcebantque simul."

been just conferred upon him, he placed his crown among the offerings in the temple, and it was suspended over the altar. On the same day a diploma was drawn up in the most flattering terms, signed by the senators of Rome, in which they declare that Petrarch had merited the title of a great poet and historian; and that, as a special mark of his merits as a poet, they had placed a crown of laurel upon his head. He was then presented with the freedom of the city of Rome.[1]

Two days after his coronation Petrarch left Rome. He had scarcely got outside the gates when he was made a prisoner by one of the many bands of brigands that infested the Campagna. He effected his escape, and returned to the city, whereupon the government provided him with an armed escort to the next city. After a short stay at Pisa, from which city he wrote to the King of Naples, he proceeded to Parma, where he received the melancholy

[1] The above details of the coronation of Petrarch are from an account written by one Lodovico Monaldeschi, who was present at the ceremony. The original manuscript is in the Borghese library.

There were two senators of Rome elected every six months. Orso Anguillara was brother-in-law of the Bishop of Lombès. His colleague, Jordano Orsini, was absent. Giovanni Barili, deputed to represent the King of Naples, arrived too late for the ceremony.

intelligence of the death of his friend, the Bishop of Lombès.

Five-and-twenty days before he received the intelligence, Petrarch dreamt that he saw the bishop enter his garden; that he spoke to him, and asked him why he came thus alone; and that suddenly the shadow of death passed over the bishop's countenance, which so startled him that he screamed aloud and awoke. This dream made such an impression upon him, that he noted down the hour and the day upon which it occurred, and mentioned the fact to many of his friends at Parma. On that very day, and at that self-same hour, the bishop had breathed his last.[1]

The Lords of Correggio, who were in possession of Parma, conferred the archdeaconry of that city upon Petrarch.

In the commencement of 1342 the poet visited Avignon. He was present in that city at the time of the death of Benedict XII., which occurred on the 25th of April, 1342. Thirteen days only elapsed between the demise of Benedict and the election of a new pontiff. The choice

[1] Petrarch says: "Diem signo, rem omnem et præsentibus amicis narro et absentibus scribo; post vigesimum quintum diem nuntius ad me mortis allatus est, collatis temporibus eo ipso die quo vita discesserat, sic mihi illum apparuisse comperio."

fell upon Pierre Roger, Cardinal of Nestrea and Aquileja, who assumed the name of Clement VI.

Unlike his predecessor, Clement VI. was a man of firm and decided character. The scion of a noble house,[1] he had mixed in the society of courts, was a good horseman, kept a sumptuous table, and surrounded himself by all that was noble, gay, and lovely in the land. It was a maxim of this princely but dissolute pope, that no man should leave dissatisfied the palace of a prince.[2]

As soon as the election of the new pontiff was known at Rome, the citizens, who still cherished the hope of beholding the return of the Papal Court to their city, sent an embassy, consisting of eighteen persons, to Clement, to solicit three favours:—first, that he would himself accept the dignity of senator, and thus put an end to the civil wars of Rome; secondly, that he would transfer the court to Rome; and thirdly, that the plenary indulgence or jubilee accorded to the Church by Boniface VIII. every hundred years, might be altered to every fifty years—a century exceeding the average time of a man's life, and thereby excluding many of the faithful from a participation in its benefits.

[1] He was son of Pierre Roger, Lord of Rosières.

[2] The Court of Avignon became the most dissipated in Europe. Clement himself was governed by the Vicomtesse de Turenne.

After a lapse of two months, Clement replied that, as regarded the title of senator of Rome, it was his already in his capacity of sovereign, but that he was willing to accept the charge under his private name, without detriment to his sovereign power. As regarded the second request, however desirous he might be to transfer the court to Rome, he could not do so until the affairs of England and France had been settled. He willingly granted the third request; and a bull was issued on the 27th of January, 1343, establishing a jubilee every fifty years. The two spokesmen of this embassy were Petrarch, in his quality of a Roman citizen, and Nicholas Gabrini, better known as Cola Rienzi.

The elegant and winning manners of Petrarch found favour in the eyes of Clement, who, as the first mark of his esteem, conferred upon him the priory of St. Nicholas, in the diocese of Pisa. Rienzi was rewarded two years afterwards (in 1344), by the appointment of notary to the Chamber of Rome.

In 1343, Petrarch wrote many sonnets in honour of Laura. It was in this year that his illegitimate daughter Francesca was born.

The year 1343 holds a place in history memorable for the wars that raged in different

parts of Europe. In Germany, John of Bohemia and Louis of Bavaria contended for the empire. The victorious arms of that gallant and enterprising monarch, Edward III., of England, spread terror in France; Spain was a prey to civil war; the petty states of Italy were, as usual, destroying each other. Florence had a tyrant in the celebrated Walter de Brienne, Duke of Athens;[1] Pisa was at war with Lucca; the Gonzaga, the Este, the Visconti, the Correggii, made Italy a universal battle-field; whilst Rome, groaning under the yoke of the barons, the Savelli, Colonna, Orsini, and other great patrician families, supported by mercenary troops, was on the eve of her great revolution. To add to the general confusion, Robert, King of Naples, breathed his last on the 17th of January, 1343, at the advanced age of eighty-two, after a reign of thirty-three years, without leaving a male heir. Two years later Naples was the scene of one of the darkest tragedies that blot the page of history.[2]

[1] *Vide* Sismondi, *Rep. Ital.*, vol. iv., p. 170, and following.

[2] The murder of Andreas, the husband of Johanna, Queen of Naples, strangled in his bed-chamber, with, it is said, the connivance of his wife. For an account of this event, *vide* Sismondi, *Rep. Ital.*, vol. iv., p. 208, *et seq.*

In a consistory held at Avignon, in 1348, Queen Johanna made her defence in the presence of the Pope, the cardinals, and foreign ambassadors, and was unanimously declared not guilty of the crime of which she was accused.

Robert, King of Naples, was twice married. His first wife, Yolande, of Arragon, bore him two children. The eldest died young; the second, Charles, Duke of Calabria, died in 1328, leaving two daughters, Johanna and Mary. By his second wife, Sanche, of Arragon, he had no issue. Robert had a rival claimant to the throne of Naples in the person of Charobert (Caribert or Charles Hubert) his nephew, son and heir of Charles Martel, his elder brother. Clement V., from political motives, adjudicated the throne to Robert, in opposition to the hereditary claims of Charobert, but the latter never renounced his claim. This prince had two sons, Louis and Andreas. Pope John XXII., to prevent a war of succession, proposed a double marriage. Johanna was to marry the elder son Andreas, whilst Louis was to espouse Mary, and the proposal was mutually accepted. The nuptials of Johanna with Andreas were solemnised at Naples with great pomp, in 1333. Andreas was then in his sixth year, Johanna three years his senior. Feeling his end approaching, Robert made a will in the presence of the high dignitaries of the state, bequeathing the government of Naples to his granddaughters, with a council of regency, until their twenty-fifth year.

On the death of the King, the Pope claimed the government of Naples during the minority of Johanna, and he selected Petrarch as his ambassador to assert his claim. It does not appear that this embassy of Petrarch was attended with much success. He left Avignon in September, and returned in December. During his stay at Naples he obtained the release of the Count of Minorbino, a friend of the Colonna, the same who afterwards contributed to the downfall of Rienzi.

The state of Italy in 1344 was worse than it had ever been. Civil war and strife prevailed; but a more terrible scourge than her own misguided princes devastated the land. Bands of marauders, chiefly Germans, the remnant of the armies of Louis of Bavaria and John of Bohemia, levied black mail indiscriminately upon all comers. These bands were formed into an army by a leader of the name of Werner, who soon found himself at the head of a formidable body of troops. He assumed the title of Duke of the Grand Company, and wore upon his breast a silver plate, with the impious inscription, "Duke Werner, Chief of the Company, enemy of God, of Piety, and of Mercy."[1] He compelled

[1] "Duca Guarnieri, signore della Compagnia, nemico di Dio, di pietà e di misericordia."

the inhabitants of Sienna and Perugia to pay him ten thousand florins of gold to redeem their cities from pillage; he devastated the Romagna with fire and sword, and then entered Lombardy, where he was opposed by the Visconti and a league of princes. On the payment to him of a large sum of money, he withdrew into Germany, but a great portion of his followers entered the service of the Italian princes, to assist them in their private quarrels. At a later period the Grand Company was reconstituted by the famous Walter de Montreal, who was put to death by Rienzi.

The sad condition of his country sank deeply into the noble soul of Petrarch. He wept bitter tears at the degeneration of her sons, and gave utterance to his sorrow in one of the noblest appeals that ever proceeded from an Italian pen:—

"Oh! my own Italy! though words are vain
The mortal wounds to close,
Unnumber'd, that thy beauteous bosom stain,
Yet may it soothe my pain
To sigh forth Tyber's woes,
And Arno's wrongs, as on Po's sadden'd shore
Sorrowing I wander and my numbers pour.
Ruler of Heaven! By the all-pitying love
That could thy Godhead move
To dwell a lowly sojourner on earth,
Turn, Lord! on this thy chosen land thine eye:
See, God of Charity!

From what light cause this cruel war has birth;
And the hard hearts by savage discord steel'd;
Thou, Father! from on high,
Touched by my humble voice, that stubborn wrath may yield!

"Ye, to whose sov'reign hands the fates confide,
Of this fair land the reins,—
(This land for which no pity wrings your breast)—
Why does the stranger's sword her plains infest?
That her green fields be dyed,
Hope ye, with blood from the barbarian's veins?
Beguiled by error weak,
Ye see not, though to pierce so deep ye boast,
Who love, or faith, in venal bosoms seek:
When throng'd your standards most,
Ye are encompass'd most by hostile bands.
O hideous deluge gather'd in strange lands,
That rushing down amain
O'erwhelms our every native lovely plain!
Alas! if our own hands
Have thus our weal betray'd, who shall our cause sustain?

"Well did kind nature, guardian of our state,
Rear her rude Alpine heights,
A lofty rampart, against German hate;
But blind ambition, seeking his own ill,
With ever restless will,
To the pure gales contagion foul invites;
Within the same strait fold
The gentle flocks and wolves relentless throng,
Where still meek innocence must suffer wrong:
And these,—Oh, shame avow'd!—
Are of the lawless hordes no tie can hold:
Fame tells how Marius' sword
Erewhile their bosoms gored,—
Nor has Time's hand aught blurr'd the record proud!

When they who, thirsting, stoop'd to quaff the flood
With the cool waters mix'd, drank of a comrade's blood ![1]

"Great Cæsar's name I pass, who o'er our plains
Pour'd forth the ensanguined tide
Drawn by our own good swords from out their veins;
But now—nor know I what ill stars preside,—
Heaven holds this land in hate!
To you the thanks!—whose hands control her helm!—
You, whose rash feuds despoil
Of all the beauteous earth the fairest realm!
Are ye impell'd by judgment, crime, or fate,
To oppress the desolate?
From broken fortunes, and from humble toil,
The hard-earned dole to wring,
While from afar ye bring
Dealers in blood, bartering their souls for hire?
In truth's great cause I sing,
Nor hatred nor disdain my earnest lay inspire.

"Nor mark ye yet, confirm'd by proof on proof,
Bavaria's perfidy,
Who strikes in mockery, keeping death aloof?
(Shame, worse than aught of loss, in honour's eye!)
While ye, with honest rage, devoted pour
Your inmost bosom's gore!—
Yet give one hour to thought,
And ye shall own, how little he can hold
Another's glory dear, who sets his own at nought.
Oh! Latin blood of old!

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1 * * * "Nor would the hostile horde
Of many-nation'd spoilers from the Po,
Quaff blood and water; nor the stranger's sword
Be thy sad weapon of defence; and so
Victor or vanquish'd, then the slave of friend or foe."—
Childe Harold.

Arise, and wrest from obloquy thy fame,
Nor bow before a name
Of hollow sound, whose power no laws enforce !
For if barbarians rude
Have higher minds subdued,
Ours ! ours the crime !—not such wise Nature's course.

"Ah ! is not this the soil my foot first press'd?
And here, in cradled rest,
Was I not softly hush'd?—here fondly rear'd?
Ah ! is not this my country ?—so endear'd
By every filial tie !
In whose lap shrouded both my parents lie !
Oh ! by this tender thought,
Your torpid bosoms to compassion wrought,
Look on the people's grief !
Who, after God, of you expect relief;
And if ye but relent,
Virtue shall rouse her in embattled might,
Against blind fury bent,
Nor long shall doubtful hang the unequal fight;
For no,—the ancient flame
Is not extinguish'd yet, that raised th' Italian name !

"Mark, sov'reign lords ! how Time, with pinion strong,
Swift hurries life along !
E'en now behold ! Death presses on the rear,
We sojourn here a day—the next, are gone !
The soul disrobed—alone,
Must shuddering seek the doubtful pass we fear.
Oh ! at the dreaded bourne,
Abase the lofty brow of wrath and scorn,
(Storms adverse to the eternal calm on high !)
And ye, whose cruelty
Has sought another's harm, by fairer deed
Of heart or hand, or intellect, aspire
To win the honest meed
Of just renown—the noble mind's desire !

Thus sweet on earth the stay!
Thus to the spirit pure, unbarr'd is Heaven's way!

"My song! with courtesy, and numbers sooth,
Thy daring reasons grace,
For thou, the mighty, in their pride of place,
Must woo to gentle ruth,
Whose haughty will long evil customs nurse,
Ever to truth averse!
Thee better fortunes wait,
Among the virtuous few—the truly great!
Tell them—but who shall bid my terrors cease?
Peace! Peace! on thee I call! return, oh! Heav'n-born Peace![1]

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[1] Lady Dacre's translation.

CHAPTER VI.

The Pope offers Petrarch the post of Apostolic Secretary.—He declines it.—Charles, son of John of Bohemia, is elected Emperor.—Degrading terms accepted by the new Emperor.—The crown is offered to Edward III. of England.—The Golden Bull.—The great revolution at Rome in 1347.—Cola Rienzi.—History of Cola Rienzi.—His friendship with Petrarch.—His correspondence with the Tribune.—Fall of Rienzi.—Petrarch obtains letters of legitimacy for his son Giovanni.—He admonishes Rienzi.—Earthquake in Italy.—The Plague.—Death of Laura.—Petrarch's dream.—Sonnet of Francis I.—Grief of Petrarch.—The jubilee at Rome.—Boccacio waits upon Petrarch as Ambassador from Florence to restore his civil rights.—Trial of Rienzi.—Petrarch appeals to the Romans in favour of Rienzi.—Pope Innocent VI.—The Visconti at Milan.—Civil war between Genoa and Venice.—Petrarch sent as Ambassador to Venice.—Cardinal Albornoz.—Return of Rienzi to Rome.—Execution of Montreal.—Death of Rienzi.

EARLY in 1345, Petrarch left Avignon for Verona, with the intention of fixing his residence permanently in Italy. His love for Laura attracted him back with the power of the load-stone. His return to Avignon gave great joy to the Pope and to the court, where the poet was a universal favourite. Clement, in the hope of attracting him to his person, offered him the high appointment of Apostolic Secretary. Petrarch, though hard pressed by his friends, firmly refused the proffered honour. His free

and independent spirit would have chafed, even under a golden curb and a silken rein. The post was conferred upon a Neapolitan.[1]

Petrarch appears to have passed the whole of the year 1346, at Avignon. That year was prolific in political events of high importance.

Louis of Bavaria, it will be remembered, had himself crowned emperor without the sanction of the Pope, for which he was excommunicated by Pope John XXII. Louis afterwards endeavoured to obtain a reconciliation, but was foiled in the attempt by the intrigues of Philip of Valois. He sent ambassadors to Clement VI. with full powers; but the conditions imposed by the pontiff were declared too exorbitant by the German Diet assembled at Frankfort. The result was, that Clement confirmed the excommunication pronounced by John XXII., and on the 13th of April, 1346, he issued a bull ordaining the election of a new emperor. The choice would have fallen upon John, King of Bohemia (killed shortly afterwards at the battle of Crecy), but he had become nearly blind. His son Charles, Duke of Moravia, was elected in his stead as Emperor Charles IV. According to

[1] "Officium, me nolente, tunc habuit magister Franciscus de Napoli."—Petr., *Ep. ad post.*

Hume, Charles was also present at the battle of Crecy.[1]

The Pope made Charles sign a document in the presence of twelve cardinals, by which he bound himself to fulfil all the promises, and to confirm the concessions, made to the Church by his great grandfather Henry and his predecessors; to revoke all the acts of Louis of Bavaria; and to promise to occupy no place appertaining to the Church either in or out of Italy; not to enter Rome until the day of his coronation, and to leave it on the day following: moreover, not to set his foot in the Papal states without the Pope's permission. On these degrading terms, which earned for him the *sobriquet* of the priest-ridden emperor,[2] he obtained the imperial crown.

[1] "There were no less than three crowned kings in this engagement: the King of Bohemia, the King of the Romans, his son, and the King of Majorca. The Kings of Bohemia and Majorca were slain. The fate of the former was remarkable: he was blind from age; but being resolved to hazard his person, and set an example to others, he ordered the reins of his bridle to be tied on each side to the horses of two gentlemen of his train: his dead body, and those of his attendants, were afterwards found among the slain with their horses standing by them in that situation. His crest was three ostrich's feathers, with the German motto, 'Ich dien' (I serve), which the Prince of Wales and his successors adopted in memory of this great victory."—*Vide* Hume, Edw. III.—Froissart, Book, ix., c. xiii., &c."

[2] In German history he is styled the *Pfaffen-kaiser*.

A powerful faction, headed by the Bishop of Mayence, and the Electors of Brandenburg and of the Palatinate, declared the election null and void; and offered the crown to Edward III. of England,—he wisely declined it. It was then offered to Frederick the Strong, Margrave of Meissen, who also refused it. The crown was finally accepted by Günther, Count of Schwarzburg. Charles, however, was solemnly crowned at Rome in 1355. In the following year he promulgated the famous Golden Bull, the fundamental law for the election of German Emperors. Louis of Bavaria was killed by a fall from his horse in 1347.

The year 1347 presented an extraordinary spectacle of what was a common occurrence in Continental Europe five centuries later,—the insurrection of a people,—the rise and fall of a dictator.

For a short period tranquillity was restored in Italy by the energies of an extraordinary man, and astonished Europe looked on in admiration. Petrarch, whose ardent and enthusiastic nature at times overruled his better judgment, beheld Rome already restored to her pristine grandeur, and the ancient republic re-established by Cola Rienzi. The intimate connection of

this extraordinary character with Petrarch, renders a brief sketch of the short though brilliant career of the last of the Roman tribunes, an indispensable link in the present narrative.

Nicolas Gabrini, better known as Cola Rienzi,[1] was the son of an innkeeper at Rome. His mother, Magdalena, was by trade a washer-woman, and the reported illegitimate daughter of the Emperor Henry VII.[2]

From a boy he was given to study, was fond of rambling about Rome and decyphering the inscriptions on the ruins; he was a good Latin scholar. His good nature and high sense of justice, made him a favourite with the humbler classes. It was probably owing to that popularity, that he was selected as one of the representatives of the Roman people on the embassy to Clement VI. It was on that occasion that he and Petrarch became friends: both were enthusiasts—both fond of study; the thoughts of both were concentrated on Rome. The

[1] Rienzi is the diminutive of Laurentius.

[2] According to some, his father, and not his mother, could claim descent from Henry.

In the brief sketch of the career of Rienzi, I have taken for my guide Cesenate's edition (1828) of "La Vita di Cola di Rienzi, Tribuno del popolo Romano, scritto da incerto autore nel secolo decimo quarto, ridotta a migliore legione, ed illustrata con note ed osservazioni storico-critiche." Various editions of this valuable work have been published.

Eternal City was the link that connected these two remarkable men. The office of notary to the Roman Chamber, conferred upon him by Clement, not only placed Rienzi in a position to obtain a deeper insight into the calamities of his country, but furnished him with the means of imparting life to the great idea he had secretly nourished in his breast, of delivering Rome from the rough-shod tyranny of foreign mercenaries, who lived upon pillage; and, in the absence both of pope and emperor, treated the inhabitants as serfs. These mercenaries were in the pay of the Roman barons, who waged war against each other with all the malignant hostility characteristic of the feuds of the Scotch clans. Fights between the Orsini and Colonna and other nobles, were common occurrences in open day-light in the streets of Rome. The seeds of revolt had already been sown in the breasts of the oppressed population; all that they wanted was a leader. Rienzi shaped his designs in secret. When the time for action drew nigh, he tested the feelings of the masses in a singular manner. In the night he caused a picture, he had painted, to be hung up on the wall of the capitol, near the market-place: attracted by the novelty, crowds assembled. The

picture was emblematical of the condition of Rome,—on a tempestuous sea was portrayed a sinking ship, her sails shivered, and her rudder torn away ; upon the deck, dressed in widow's weeds, her breast bared to the wind, her locks floating in the breeze, knelt a female figure, her hands folded as if in the act of supplication. Above the figure were the words, in large characters—"This is Rome." Not far off were represented four other vessels, their masts and rudders torn away, the waves breaking over them. On each deck lay the corpse of a female; above them were the words, Babylon—Carthage —Troy — Jerusalem — and the explanation: "These cities were first endangered by, and then fell a prey to, tyranny." Between the four vessels were the words :—

"Thou didst rank the first of all,
Thus do we await thy fall." [1]

On the left of the vessels were two islands, on one of them sat a female figure with her head declined as if from shame, with the inscription, "This is Italy." Issuing from her lips were the words, "Thou didst subjugate the world, and didst regard me alone as thy sister." On the

[1] "Sopra ogni signoria fosti in altura
Ora aspettiamo qua la tua rottura."

other island were four females representing the four cardinal virtues, — Temperance, Justice, Prudence, and Firmness. On the right hand there was a small island, on which another female figure, robed in white, knelt as if in the act of prayer. Above was the inscription, "The Christian Faith." From her mouth issued the words, "O great father, my leader, and my lord; if Rome perish, what will become of me?"[1] On the right hand, in the foreground of the picture, were depicted four species of animals, blowing horns to represent the winds that caused the tempest. The first consisted of lions, wolves, and bears, with the superscription, "These are the powerful barons and corrupt governors." The second species represented dogs, swine, and goats, "the evil counsellors, the accomplices of the barons." The third consisted of foxes and dragons, "the false officials, corrupt judges, and notaries." Then came hares, cats, and monkeys, designated as "bandits, adulterers, and murderers." In the centre of the heavens the divine majesty was depicted as if in judgment; two swords issued from his mouth; on his right hand stood Peter, on his left

[1] "O sommo patre duca e signor mio
Se Roma pere, dove staro jo?"

Paul. "When the people beheld this symbolical picture," says the unknown biographer of Rienzi, "they marvelled greatly, and went thoughtfully to their homes. The barons looked on and laughed, and treated Rienzi as a fool and a mountebank. It is the old story of the elder Brutus over again."

A more significant notification was made to the people shortly afterwards, in a similar manner. A large board was affixed to the church of St. George with the inscription :—

"In a short time the Romans will return to their ancient good estate."

This "Buono-Stato" was Rienzi's battle cry. That massive engine, a whole people, once set in motion, now rolled on of its own free will. The first meeting of conspirators was held by Rienzi, towards the end of April, on the Aventine mount. A solemn oath was taken by all present to restore the "Good Estate." Shortly afterwards Rienzi convoked the Romans to an assembly in the church of St. John of Lateran, ostensibly to explain an inscription upon an ancient tablet of bronze. Stephen Colonna, his son Gianni, and most of the Roman barons attended. This table represented the Roman Senate conferring the imperial authority upon

the Emperor Vespasian. Dressed in flowing robes of white, with a symbolical head-dress surmounted by a crown of gold, Rienzi, in glowing language, fearlessly exposed to the assembled multitude the sufferings of Rome. After enumerating the powers conferred upon Vespasian, he pointed out that it was the ROMAN PEOPLE alone who had conferred them; and then, dropping his voice, he exclaimed with an accent of grief which vibrated upon the hearts of the multitude, "Signori, tanta era la maiestade del popolo di Roma, che a lo' mperatore dava l'autoridate; ora mo l'avemo perduta."[1] It was by such means that this bold conspirator prepared Rome's great revolution. The barons, says his chronicler, cracked their sides with laughter at the buffoon![2]

Stephen Colonna was the man Rienzi feared most; accordingly he took advantage of his temporary absence at Corneto, to put his plans into execution. On the 20th of May, 1347,[3] Rienzi summoned the Romans by sound of trumpet, to assemble unarmed when they should

[1] "Such, my countrymen, was the majesty of the Roman people, that they could confer powers upon Emperors. Now, alas, we have lost it."

[2] "Li Baroni crepavano di risa."

[3] "Era il giomo di Pentecoste, venti di Maggio delt' anno 1347." —*Vita di C. Rienzi.*

hear the bell toll from the church of St. Angelo. In the evening the bell tolled slowly and solemnly, when dense masses of the population swarmed towards the church. Rienzi had passed the night in prayer, for it was his object to throw the sacred veil of religion over his undertaking, being fully aware, like Cromwell, of the effect of that sentiment upon the people. Placing himself at the head of the multitude, Rienzi, who had persuaded the weak-minded Bishop of Orvieto, the Pope's vicar, to accompany him, advanced towards the capitol. He had in his pay, and near his person, one hundred armed men ; he himself was armed with sword, dagger, and breastplate. On reaching the capitol he made an eloquent appeal to the people, and ordered a draught of the constitution of the "Good Estate" to be read, which was done by Cecco Marcino.[1]

The populace shouted applause, and taking the hint which had been given them in the church, they conferred upon him, unanimously, the same powers the Roman people had granted to Vespasian. Rienzi's ambition was now on the eve of its fulfilment ; he had not yet drunk deep of the intoxicating cup of power,—

[1] This draught is given in full in the "Vita di Cola Rienzi."

the first drops upon his lips gave a new stimulus to his energies. With a prudence and a knowledge of human nature, rarely equalled, he accepted the powers conferred upon him only on two conditions—that he should have the vicar of the Pope for his colleague, and the Pope's approval of what he had done. This gave courage to the timid. The poor Bishop of Orvieto, who cuts a sorry figure in the narrative, instead of protesting against all that had occurred until he received instructions, acquiesced in everything that had been done, or was doing, by Rienzi, who, following up his success, took immediate possession of the palace in the capitol, and that very day issued his first decree.

Thus was accomplished the first act of one of the most wonderful revolutions that history has recorded.

The astonishment of old Stephen Colonna, when tidings of these events reached him, was only equalled by his indignation. He ordered his horse to be saddled, and, accompanied by a single attendant, spurred on to Rome. On entering the city he loudly gave vent to his anger. Rienzi allowed him no time to dismount, but sent him a written order to leave the city. Meanwhile the great bell of the capitol com-

menced tolling, and the citizens flew to arms, Rienzi had expected the Colonna—but at the head of his troops. The old warrior tore the new dictator's missal into a hundred pieces, and, with an oath, swore he would hurl him out of the palace window with his own hands; but so rapid was the rising of the citizens, that he was compelled to trust to the speed of his horse for safety, and seek his stronghold, Palæstrina. The flight of the Colonna was followed by a decree banishing all the nobles from Rome. They obeyed what they could not resist. A sort of municipal guard was established, and the city declared in a state of siege. Some of the more daring robbers who infested the streets, were publicly hanged as an example: this consolidated the popularity of Rienzi.

The news of the revolution soon spread to the court at Avignon. To the effect produced, Petrarch, who was present, testifies: "When danger is over," he says, "fear is denied; but I was present—I know what I saw—and what I heard—what I could read in the countenances of the highest dignitaries. Terror seized the court of the Pope." And then he adds, with exultation, "Rome is yet something!"[1]

[1] "Eram tunc in Gallis, et scio quid audierim, quid viderim, quid

At this juncture letters arrived from Rienzi, couched in moderate language, in which he solicited the Pope's approval of what he had done, and in which he demanded His Holiness's pleasure. Clement thanked Rienzi for what he had effected; confirmed him and his colleague, the Bishop of Orvieto, in the powers given to them by the Roman people,—"powers (said the Papal letter) which could not be conferred without our sanction; for, in addition to the sovereignty of Rome appertaining to us by right, the people bestowed upon us the right of appointing its magistrates." The Pope proved himself a match for the dictator.

Rienzi, however, before he received the Pope's reply, had convened the people and obtained their sanction to his acts, thus making two moves to the Pope's one. They wished to proclaim him emperor. He refused the title, though he accepted the office under the less prominent one of Tribune; and by a master-piece of policy, he demanded that a similar title should be conferred upon the Bishop of Orvieto. To awe the nobles, Rienzi ordered the execu-

eorum qui maximi habebantur in verbis inque oculis legerim. Negarent modo forsitan, aculeo absente, perfacile est. Veri autem tunc omnia pavor impleverat; adeo adhuc aliquid Roma est."—Petr. *Ep.*

tion of Martino di Puerto, a Roman patrician, the nephew of two cardinals, and a near relation of the Orsini. He was found guilty of pillaging a merchant vessel; he was decapitated, and his body hung upon a gibbet for three days. One of the Anniballeschi was executed with him.

Hearing that the nobles were conspiring against him, he cited them before his tribunal, where he made them swear on the Eucharist, not to take up arms against him. Old Stephen Colonna stoutly refused to comply, or even to recognise his authority.

The aspect of Rome had by this time completely changed; the city was free from assassins and thieves—commerce revived—the high roads became safe—agriculture was resumed—success crowned all the efforts of the Tribune.

The views of Rienzi were not confined to Rome; he entertained the gigantic idea of restoring the Roman Empire to the splendour it had acquired under the first emperors. With him, thought was the instant precursor of action. He despatched emissaries to all the princes and cities of Italy, demanding their adhesion to the league of the "Good Estate;" at the same time addressing letters to all the crowned heads of Europe demanding their friendship. In these

letters he styled himself,—"Nicola severo e clemente, di libertade, di pace, e di guistizia Tribuno, anco de la santa Romana Republica liberatore illustre."

Florence and Perugia were the first to accredit ambassadors to the Tribune. The lords of Padua, Mantua, Bologna, and Ferrara followed the example. Lucchino Visconti, the most powerful prince in Italy, gave him his warm support; Louis of Bavaria[1] solicited him to intercede with the Pope in his favour; whilst the King of Hungary submitted to his decision the case of the murder of his brother Andreas. Philip of Valois, King of France, looked upon him as an adventurer, and treated his emissaries with contempt.

Petrarch was one of the first to hail the Tribune as the harbinger of the restoration of the Roman republic. He addressed letters to Rienzi, encouraging him to proceed in the path he had entered upon. In these letters he compared him to the great men of ancient Rome—to Brutus who drove the Tarquins out of Rome, and to the other Brutus who plunged his dagger into the heart of Cæsar.[2]

[1] It was on the 11th Oct., 1347, that Louis was thrown from his horse and killed.

[2] "Brutus ab uno, tu a multis tyrannis usurpatam libertatem

Rienzi was flattered by the expressed approbation of a man who enjoyed such universal esteem, and wrote in reply a letter, which is a most valuable historical document, since it demonstrates the confidence at that time adventured in the success of his exertions. It runs thus :—

"Nicholas, severe and clement, Tribune of Liberty, of Peace, and of Justice, and illustrious Liberator of the sacred Roman Republic, to the illustrious and virtuous Signor Francesco Petrarca, most worthily crowned poet, and our very dear fellow citizen, greeting, honour and plenitude of joy.

"Your amiable letter, adorned with the flowers of rhetoric and forcible argument, has delighted all who have read it, or who have heard it read. Well digested, it has nourished their minds. Your exhortations, founded on solid motives and on the example of the great men of antiquity, are a stimulus to noble deeds. Your letter clearly portrays your attachment to Rome, and your zeal for the 'Good Estate.' We know you too well not to do justice to your prudence—to

vendicas .... Salve noster Camille, noster Brute, noster Romule seu quolibet alio nomine dici mavis ! Salse Romanæ libertatis Romanæ pacis, Romanæ tranquillitatis auctor." (Extract.)—Fr. Petr. *ad. Nicol. Lauren.*

your goodness; or to doubt the sincerity of your sentiments for us and for the city: wherefore, we, and all the Romans, love you, and desire to contribute to your advancement and welfare. I heartily wish you were at Rome! Your presence would adorn the city, as a precious gem enriches the golden ring in which it is set. The soul of the people is liberty, the swects of which they are beginning to taste: there is not a Roman who would not sooner have his heart torn out of his body, than return to the state of slavery under which he has so long been suffering. You know that Rome was once the source and the fountain-head of liberty; things naturally return to their pristine state. This city, which for many centuries has suffered the most cruel slavery, now praises the Lord that its chains are rent asunder. There are no perils which the Romans would not encounter to preserve the precious gift they now enjoy. Rest assured that you will always find us ready to do everything that may contribute to your satisfaction.

"Given at the Capitol, where justice reigns, and where we live with an upright heart, on the 28th July, the first year of the free Republic."[1]

[1] The original MS. is preserved in the library at Turin.

The influence of Petrarch at the court of Avignon, made him a powerful ally to the Tribune. The French cardinals dreaded the success of Rienzi, since it threatened to annihilate their influence in Italy. The Italians were divided in opinion; some openly applauded all his acts; others blamed his usurpation of the power which appertained to the head of the Church, whilst they secretly rejoiced at the expulsion of the barons from Rome. Petrarch, with his wonted frankness, openly and in warm language espoused the Tribune's cause.[1]

In the midst of these political agitations the muse of Petrarch was not idle. Sonnets in honour of Laura, in his happiest style, delighted the lovers of poetry and of song. It is presumed, that in this year he wrote his famous ode, "Spirto Gentil," respecting which so much controversy exists; the dispute being whether it was written in honour of Rienzi, or of Stephen Colonna the younger.[2]

[1] "All Avignon," he says, in a letter to Rienzi, "can bear witness with what warmth I rebuke those who dare to question the integrity of your intentions or the justice of your rule. I neither look before nor behind me. I care not whom I offend. I have made enemies of many whose good opinion I formerly studied to obtain. I am not surprised. Experience has taught me the truth of the saying of Terence, 'Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit.'"

[2] *Vide* Cesenate Comento sulla canzone "Spirto gentil" del Petrarca; De Sade, note 10., vol. ii.; Tiraboschi, *Storia della*

A most extraordinary change was suddenly visible in the conduct of the Tribune. In the short space of three months, he had realised all his dreams of greatness. The height to which he had climbed made him dizzy. He had quaffed the goblet of unlimited power to the dregs, and fell, as others have fallen before him. Temporary insanity seems to have seized upon his brain. Enjoying imperial power, the almost puerile wish to be dubbed a knight took possession of him. He fixed the 1st of August, 1347, for the ceremony.

His former simplicity of life was now exchanged for one of regal splendour. On the day of the performance, which took place in the church of St. John of Lateran, sumptuous festivities were decreed at Rome. Wine flowed all day from the nostrils of the bronze equestrian statue of Constantine, and the most costly viands were prepared for all comers. As though he felt he could not carry his folly far enough, Rienzi took a bath in the porphyry vase in which the Emperor Constantine is supposed to have bathed, when he was cured of the leprosy by St. Sylvester. He had his couch prepared

Letteratura Italiana, preface to vol. v.; and many other Italian writers.

within the precincts of the columns of the church, Fonte di San Giovanni. It is remarked by his chronicler, that the couch broke down as he sat upon it.[1] On the following day, he buckled on the golden spurs, and, adorned in a scarlet mantle, with a sword by his side, he proceeded to the chapel of St. Boniface, accompanied by an immense concourse of people. Here he committed the greatest folly of all. Rising suddenly from the sort of throne upon which he sat, he exclaimed, in a loud voice—"We cite to appear before our tribunal Louis, Duke of Bavaria, and Charles, King of Bohemia, that we may decide upon their claims to the crown: also, the self-styled Electors, Princes of Germany, are to produce the titles upon which they found their right of election, which appertains to the Roman people." He then drew his sword, and striking the air towards the three divisions of the earth, exclaimed: "This is mine!—this is mine!—this is mine!" The Bishop of Orvieto, who was present, was stupified at this unexpected act of his colleague, but retained sufficient presence of mind to protest against it. Rienzi

[1] "Come venne 'l Tribuno a salire al letto, subitamente una parte del letto cadde in terra, et sic in nocte silenti mansit."—*Vita de Cola di Rienzi.*

ordered the trumpets to sound, and extinguished the voice of the protester.[1]

On the 15th of August, Rienzi committed another piece of egregious folly. He proceeded in great pomp to the church of St. Lateran, where he was presented with seven crowns, emblematical of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.[2] The ceremony was performed in the presence of the ambassadors of Florence, Perugia, Sienna, and other Italian cities, and was a fatal blow to the dignity and to the popularity of the Tribune. The first flush of the excitement which attended the festivities over, the Romans began to ask themselves why such mummeries should be. The profanation of the vase of Constantine, and the sumptuous and lavish expense of the Tribune, raised a party against him.

The intelligence of his extravagancies was joyful news to the Papal Court. The effect was soon visible. His next messenger to Avignon was insulted, and sent back to Rome with his staff broken, an act at which Petrarch was highly

[1] Cesenate gives an Italian translation of Rienzi's citation. Some Italian historians assert that he also cited the Pope to appear. The simple fact that such a charge was never brought against him at his trial is a sufficient refutation.

[2] For a curious description of this ceremony, *vide* Cesenate, vol. i., p. 156.

indignant, and upon which he addressed a letter in no measured terms to the Roman people.[1]

Petrarch resolved to pay a visit to Rienzi. He took leave of Laura, an occasion which drew from him some of his best sonnets, and proceeded to Vaucluse. Whilst there, he received intelligence from Rome, which filled his heart with sorrow and indignation.

Under the pretext that the barons had conspired against his life, Rienzi, who now (14th September, 1347), held tyrannical sway in Rome, ordered the arrest of the principal nobles, among whom were old Stephen Colonna, his grandson, Giovanni, Pietro Colonna, four of the Orsini, a Bertoldo, some of the Savelli, and others.[2] They were incarcerated in the dungeons of the capitol, where they passed an anxious night. Stephen Colonna alone, like a lion newly caged, paced his prison up and down all night, grinding his teeth, and continually calling upon the guards to let him out, or slay him. The fears of his fellow prisoners were

[1] *Ep. sine titulo Liber. Opera Petr.*

[2] An old Bolognese Chronicle speaks of such a conspiracy :—"Alquanto nobili Romani e altri signori, ciò è i Colonneri, gli Ursini e i Sabelli non essendo contenti della Signoria del Tribuno pensarono e tratterono insieme come potessero cesere dalla signoria del d. Tribuno. Ultimamente ordinarono con un assassino che per pecunia lo devesse uccidere. Quel trattato venne a notizia di lui. Preso et assassino e tormentata confessò tutto il trattato."

increased, when a number of friars, of the order of the Cordeliers, entered the dungeons to confess them, with the intimation that they had been sentenced to death by the Tribune. Most of them received the sacrament. Stephen Colonna waved back the monk with his hand, saying that he was not in a fit state of mind to receive it. On the morrow, the great bell of the capitol tolled solemnly. The judgment-hall was hung with silken tapestry of red and white stripes, a custom adopted by Rienzi when he ordered an execution. At the eleventh hour Rienzi hesitated, or relented. From the balcony he harangued the people, and requested their intercession for the lives of the conspirators. The people did intercede—perhaps against his expectation ;—but many shook their heads, and observed that he had lighted a flame which it would be no easy task to extinguish, a remark which the result justified. Scarcely had the barons been set free, when they left Rome burning with the desire of vengeance ; and regarding themselves in no wise bound by oaths of allegiance extorted from them under the fear of death, they appointed a meeting at the castle of Marino, a stronghold of the Orsini.

And now began a civil war. From Marino,

the barons made *razzias* in the Campagna to the very walls of Rome, their ranks being swelled by adventurers, who had been attracted by the prospect of booty. Rienzi cited the "rebels" to appear; but they whipped his emissaries, and laughed him to scorn. The Tribune hastily formed an army of 24,000 foot, and 800 horse, with which he devastated the lands belonging to the barons, who, however, now planned an attack upon Rome. With this intent they assembled 600 horse, and 4000 foot at Palæstrina, the stronghold of the Colonna, hoping to take the gates by surprise, and in reliance upon friends in the city.

On the 20th November, the little army, commanded by Stephen Colonna the younger, commenced its march. As they approached the walls, the deep tones of the alarm bell assailed their ears. It was evident that they had been betrayed. Stephen Colonna rode up to one of the gates, and demanded admission. "I am a citizen of Rome," he said, "and I wish to return to my house. I come for the 'Good Estate.'—Go back," replied Paulo Buffa, the sentry on duty, "the guards are changed; you cannot enter; the gates are locked. In God's name, be gone, or you may rue the consequence.

Know you not how the anger of the people is excited against you, the disturbers of the 'Good Estate?' As a proof of my veracity, here are the keys." So saying, he threw over the wall the keys, which fell into the trench, and were lost.[1]

A council of war was held, and an honourable retreat decided upon.

The little army had been divided into three bodies, and they paraded along the walls, the trumpets sounding notes of defiance. The first two divisions had passed, without being molested, the gate which was to have been opened to them. The rear division consisted of the Roman nobles.

Day was beginning to dawn: the citizens, excited by the insulting blasts of defiance, attempted to open the gates to make a sortie. Not finding the keys, they smashed the locks. Gianni Colonna, under the delusion that friends inside were at hand, dashed through the aperture, lance in rest. The citizens fled to a man.[2] Finding that he was alone, they rallied. The unfortunate Gianni, who had expected the others

[1] *Vita di Cola di Rienzi.*

[2] "Deh come gran paura fece al propolo! allora dinanzi adesso dieò la volta a fuggire tutta la cavalleria di Roma, similmente tornò a retro tutto 'l popolo fuggendo quasi per spazio di mezza balestrata." —*Vita di Cola di Rienzo.*

to follow him, turned his horse's head, but he was struck down, and immediately put to death. He was scarcely twenty years of age. Stephen Colonna, who rode last of the troops, missing his son, guessed what had happened, and spurring through the crowd at the gate, beheld the corpse of Gianni, which had been stripped naked. All this was the affair of a moment.

It was a sad day for the Colonna. Seven pillars of that noble house were doomed to fall. Stephen endeavoured to rejoin his friends; but horse and rider were crushed by the portcullis of the gate. Twenty swords were thrust into his body, one blow nearly splitting his skull in two. This was the signal for a general sortie. Peter Agapit Colonna, his brother, and two illegitimate scions of his house, were the next victims. The rout became complete.

This was a great triumph for Rienzi. In his exultation, he refused burial to his slain enemy; but instead of following up his success, he lost his time in processions and rejoicings. Old Stephen Colonna, now verging on his ninetieth year, received the sad tidings without a sign of anguish, even to the shedding of a tear. "God's will be done," said the brave old man,—"better

they have died thus than that they should have submitted to the yoke of a boor."[1]

Petrarch was at Genoa, on his way to Rome, when part of these tidings reached him in a letter from his friend Lelius. On the 26th November, he wrote an eloquent letter to Rienzi, warning him of his fate, and exhorting him to be prudent. "The higher you have risen," says Petrarch, "the greater will be your fall:—

'Facilis descensus Averni.'

You alone in your century have attained the summit of virtue and of glory; the fall will be terrible. Beware of giving gratification to your enemies and affliction to your friends. I was writing an ode in your honour—force me not to change it into a satire. I was on my way to visit you. I would sooner set my foot in the far Indies than enter Rome, if what I hear of you is true."[2]

[1] Petrarch records this fact:—"Audito primogeniti sui viri ingentis et nepotis ex eo incomparabilis adolescentis interitu . . . nec lacrimulam ullam sudit nec verbum miserabile, nec accentum tristitiæ, sed ad primum nuntium, defixis parumper terræ oculis, ad extremum dixit: 'Fiat voluntas Dei, et certè satius est mori, quam unius rustici jugum pati.'"

[2] Famil. Epist., lib. vii., lit. vii. It is on the authority of this last passage that the assertion is supported that the Ode "Spirto gentil" was not written in honour of Rienzi. He may, however, have contemplated a second Ode. This letter to the Tribune, which, like all Petrarch's voluminous correspondence is

It was no easy task for a noble and enthusiastic nature like that of Petrarch, to pass judgment upon what he had cherished as the good, the beautiful, and the true. It was only on his arrival at Parma, early in December, that he heard of what had befallen the Colonna. Sincerely attached to their house, his grief at the intelligence that awaited him was deep indeed. As individuals he wept for them; as tyrants he scarcely regretted their death. He expresses this feeling in a letter to a friend. Speaking of the Colonna, he says:—"Nulla toto orbe principum familia carior, carior tamen respublica, carior Roma, carior Italia!"

The fall of Rienzi was as rapid as his rise to power. On the 24th November, four days after the massacre of the nobles, the Tribune proceeded in state on horseback to the gate where Stephen Colonna had been slain. The naked corpse still remained in a puddle of blood and water. Alighting from his horse, he made his son Giovanni kneel, and taking a handful of the water, threw it upon him, exclaiming,

in Latin, concludes as follows:—"Examina tecum nec te fallas, qui sis, qui fueris, unde quo veneris, quorsum inoffensa libertate progredi fas sit, quam personam indueris, quod nomen adsumpseris, quam spem tui feceris, quid professus fueris, videbis te non dominum Reip. sed ministrum. Vale."

"Henceforth thou art the knight of victory." He then dubbed him a knight in the usual form.[1] It was by this and similar acts that he disgusted the people: he moreover ordered a tax on salt to be levied, to defray the expenses of his establishment. The price of corn was so high that it was ruinous to the poorer classes.[2] The once disinterested, high-minded Rienzi, the idol of Rome, had become "the Tyrant."

The Pope took courage, and entered into a league with the barons. He sent a Cardinal Legate to Rome, in the person of Bertrand de Deux, with secret instructions to undermine the power of the Tribune. The cardinal took a bold step. He summoned Rienzi to render an account of his stewardship, and in default placed him under excommunication. On the night of the 14th December barricades were erected in the quarter of Rome inhabited by the Colonna. The people were headed by Count Minorbino,[3] Lucas Savelli, and Sciaretta Colonna. Rienzi ordered the alarm bell to be sounded; but the people muttered threats. A body of cavalry attempted

[1] *Vita di Cola di Rienzi*, p. 91.

[2] "Lo grano era caro, e valeve lo rubbio sette libre di moneta." —*Ib.*

[3] Giovanni Pipino, Paladin of Altamura, Count of Minorbino, is the person whose liberation Petrarch succeeded in obtaining from the Queen of Naples.

to storm the barricades, but were driven back with the loss of their captain. The Tribune shut himself up in the Castle of St. Angelo, and escaped in disguise during the night. The Cardinal Legate took quiet possession of Rome, the barons returned three days afterwards, and Rome relapsed into a state of anarchy worse than that which preceded the rise of Rienzi.

Petrarch relinquished the idea of visiting Rome. In this year he obtained from Clement letters of legitimacy for his son Giovanni.

In January, 1348, we find Petrarch at Verona. On the 25th of this month, Italy was visited by a terrible earthquake, the precursor of a much greater calamity—the plague—of which dreadful scourge so forcible and eloquent a description has been handed down to us by Boccacio in his preface to the Decamerone. Petrarch's Laura fell a victim to it.

It made its appearance in Avignon early in January. The symptoms of malady were violent fever, accompanied by spitting of blood. Pope Clement did every thing that lay in his power to meet this great calamity. He ordered the priests to grant plenary absolution to all persons attacked by the disease. In less than three months one hundred and twenty thousand of

the inhabitants were carried to their graves. Laura was attacked with the first symptoms on the 3rd April. Petrarch, in his sonnets, "In morte di Madonna Laura," has recorded her last moments in undying verse. She died on the 6th April, 1348, early in the morning.

"Sai ch' in mille trecento quarant 'otto,
Il di sesto d' Aprile, in l' hora prima
Dal corpo usceò quell' anima beata." [1]

Petrarch informs us that Laura appeared to him in a vision upon the very day and at the hour at which she expired. In this vision the spirit of Laura announced her death. After what had occurred to him on the decease of his friend, the Bishop of Lombès, this dream evidently had a powerful effect upon him. It was on the 19th of April, at Parma, that he received the mournful intelligence. His grief found utterance in some of his finest sonnets. In the first he wrote after her death, he declares himself incapable of expressing his feelings :—

"Hor qual fasse il dolor qui non si stima
Ch' a pena oso pensarne l'non ch' io sia
Ardito di parlarne in versi o 'n rima."

If Petrarch surpassed all other Italian poets in singing the praises of a mistress during her

[1] *Vide* Appendix.

lifetime, he may be said to have exceeded himself in lauding her virtues after her death. Misfortunes, says the old adage, seldom come alone. On the 3rd of July of this year he lost his friend and patron, Cardinal Colonna. These two sad events form the theme of one of his finest sonnets :—

"Rotta è l'alta Colonna, e 'l verde Lauro
Che facean ombra al mio stanco pensero:
Perdus ho quel, che ritrovar non spero
Dal Borea all' Austro, e dal mar Indo al Mauro.
Tolto mi hai, Morte, il mio doppio Tesauro
Che mi fea viver lieto, e gire altero;
Eristorar nol può terra, ne impero
Nè gemma Oriental, nè forgar d'auro.
Ma se consentimento è di destino;
Che pa iò più, se no aver l' alma trista,
Umidi gli occhi sempre, e' l viso chino?
Onostea vita che è si bella in vista;
Com' perdo agevolmente in un mattino
Quel, che 'n molt' anni a gran pend s' acquista!"

To divert his mind from melancholy, caused by these events, Petrarch resolved upon a change of scene. He visited Carpi and Mantua, where he became the honoured guest of the Gonzaga. From Mantua he proceeded to Verona and Padua.

The fate of Rome preyed continually upon his mind. That city was again a prey to a licentious nobility, and the high roads were infested by bands of adventurers. The result of his first

appeal to the Italian princes convinced him that no hope was to be entertained of them. Under these circumstances, he drew up an appeal to the Emperor Charles IV. The emperor sent a reply, which did not reach Petrarch till two years afterwards.

It will be remembered that Clement VI., at the solicitation of the Roman people, granted a jubilee every fifty years, instead of every century. The year of the jubilee was now at hand. Petrarch was determined to attend; but on his way to Rome, he was thrown from his horse, and compelled to keep his bed many weeks after his arrival at that city.

The jubilee commenced on Christmas-day, 1349, which, according to the Roman calculation, was the first day of 1350. From Christmas to Easter the highways to Rome swarmed with pilgrims from every quarter of the civilized world. It has been estimated that no less than one million pilgrims were in the city itself, or encamped outside the walls. The human stream fluctuated continually: day and night the streets were crowded. "No one could have imagined," says Petrarch, "that the plague had been devastating Europe."

The 6th of April, 1351, the third anniversary

of the death of Laura, was a memorable day for Petrarch. He was waited upon by Boccacio, sent on a special mission by the Republic of Florence, to announce his recal to his country, and the restoration of his paternal inheritance and civil rights, offering him at the same time the chancellorship of the University, recently established at Florence.

Petrarch sent a gracious reply, but resolved to visit Avignon first. He left Padua, to which city he had returned from Rome, on the 3rd May, accompanied by his son Giovanni. He remained a month at Verona, and arrived at Vaucluse towards the end of June. He remained a month at a spot endeared to him by so many recollections, and then proceeded to the Papal Court at Avignon.

This city was all stir and activity. King John of France, the successor of Philip de Valois, whose fate it was shortly afterwards to become the prisoner of Edward the Black Prince, had arrived with a numerous suite. Jousts and banquets were held daily in his honour. The ambassadors of Hungary and Naples, with large retinues, were awaiting the conclusion of the negotiations for peace pending between those two states; but what gave additional interest

to the city was, that thousands had been attracted to Avignon by the trial of Rienzi.

This extraordinary man, after his flight from Rome, sought refuge at Naples, where he was well received by the King of Hungary, then in possession of that capital. The Pope demanded his extradition, which the king refused. Rienzi, however, thought it prudent to leave, and sought a refuge in the mountains. It is not improbable—and it is asserted by many writers—that he was present at Rome in disguise during the jubilee, and that he then sounded the minds of the people, and found them ready for a second revolution. With the daring natural to him he proceeded to Prague to the Emperor Charles I., the very potentate whom he had so ostentatiously cited to appear before him. The emperor informed Clement that Rienzi was in his power. The Pope replied, that if he did not think fit to try "that son of Belial" himself, he was to send him well guarded to Avignon. Finding himself a prisoner, Rienzi demanded a public trial. He was sent under a strong escort to Avignon, but his journey had all the appearance of a triumphal procession: old and young came forth to do homage to the ex-tribune, as he passed.[1]

[1] "Per tutte le terre si levavano i popoli—per tutta la via li furo fatti solenni onori."—*Vita di Cola di Rienzi.*

The influence of Petrarch at the court of Clement was considerable. In this year (1352) Clement again offered him the post of Apostolic secretary, which he once more declined. Though he no longer beheld in Rienzi the saviour of his country, his admiration for what he had done was great, and he showed himself his warm advocate on the present occasion, by writing an appeal in his favour to the Roman people.

Rienzi was kept a close prisoner in irons.[1] A high court of justice, consisting of three cardinals, was instituted to try him. The accusations brought against him were :—

1. Heresy.
2. Usurpation of the papal prerogative.
3. Desecration of the vase of Constantine—sacrilege.
4. An attempt to establish that the rights of the Roman empire were invested in the Roman people, who alone had the right to elect an emperor. His citation of the emperor to appear before him.

Rienzi conducted his own defence.

The charge of heresy was not tenable. Rienzi

[1] "Fu rinchiuro in una torre grossa e larga; una giusta catena teneva in gamba; la catena era alligata su la volta de la torre. La stava Cola vestito di panni mezzani, avea libri assai, suo Tito Livio, sue storie di Roma, la Bibbia e altri libri."—*Vita di Cola di Rienzi.*

proved that he had accepted the authority offered to him by the Roman people with the consent of the Pope, who had approved, ratified, and confirmed all that the Roman people had done. As regarded his bathing in the porphyry vase of Constantine, he maintained that a pious Christian might very well receive the ablutions from the Pope's vicar in a vase wherein a heathen had bathed with impunity. He moreover questioned the fact of Constantine having bathed in it. As to the last and most serious accusation, he skilfully shielded himself behind the Roman people, who, he said, had always asserted their independence, and of whose will he was the interpreter. The question was a delicate one. The cardinals durst not condemn him. His eloquence saved his life ; but Clement kept him in prison, thinking him too dangerous a man to be at large.

On the night between the 5th and 6th December, Clement VI. died of an abscess. He was succeeded by Cardinal D'Ostia, as Pope Innocent VI.

The new pope was no favourite with Petrarch, who left Avignon shortly after he had been elected to the pontificate. At Milan our poet became the honoured guest of John Visconti,

the most powerful prince in Italy. This prince was proud of being surrounded by men of genius, and exhausted all the arts of persuasion to induce Petrarch to remain permanently at Milan. Whilst at this capital, the poet received an invitation from Andreas Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, to visit him. Finally, he was persuaded to acquiesce with the wishes of John Visconti, who appointed him his privy councillor, and gave him a small house near the Basilica of St. Ambrogio, contiguous to the Porta Vercelli, where he prosecuted his studies undisturbed, and *con amore*.

After the disastrous naval engagement between the Genoese and Venetian fleets, in the bay of Cagliari, in which the Genoese were completely routed, Petrarch was again thrown into an active political career.[1] The Genoese offered allegiance and demanded assistance from the Visconti. Petrarch was instructed to receive the deputation, and accept the proffered allegiance. An army was forthwith sent to

[1] This memorable engagement took place on the 29th Aug., 1353. The Genoese, who had heretofore been regarded as invincible at sea, lost 30 galleys, 3500 prisoners, and 2000 killed and wounded. Sismondi gives a graphic description of this engagement in his "Histoire des Républiques Italiennes." (*Vide* vol. iv., pp. 324, *et seq.*)

their assistance, which entered Genoa on the 10th October, 1353.

The submission of the Genoese to the Visconti created no small alarm in Italy. The lesser states, fearing that they should one by one fall a prey to the grasping ambition of the Lombard, resolved to make common cause against him. The Venetians, who had quite enough to do to fight the Genoese, even single-handed, felt that when they were aided by Lombardy the match was unequal. Venice, Padua, Mantua, and Verona entered into a league. They invited Florence to join them. But however glad the Florentines would have been to behold the humiliation of the Visconti, they nevertheless deemed it advisable not to join a confederacy against so powerful a prince, with whom, moreover, they were on terms of peace and amity. The confederate cities sent ambassadors to the Emperor Charles, inviting him to place himself at their head. The offer was too tempting to be refused. John Visconti became alarmed and offered terms of conciliation. He invited the emperor to Milan to receive the iron crown of Lombardy, and at the same time bethought himself of measures whereby a peace between Venice and Genoa might be effected.

With this object in view, he selected Petrarch as his ambassador to the Venetian republic, as well on account of his great talents, as for the friendship which existed between the poet and the Doge Andreas Dandolo.

Petrarch proceeded on his mission to Venice in the month of January, 1354, confident of success. Great was his disappointment to find that the Venetians turned a deaf ear to his overtures. He had various private interviews with Dandolo, but to no purpose. After remaining a month at Venice, he returned to Milan, vexed in spirit at his failure. The refusal of the Venetians to listen to any but the most favourable conditions is explained by their insular position, the powerful league to which they belonged, and the promises of the emperor to come to their assistance. It would have been better if they had acceded to the terms proposed by Petrarch. Death spared Dandolo the grief of witnessing the Venetian fleet defeated by the Genoese admiral, Paganino Doria, on the 3rd November, 1354.

John Visconti died on the 5th October, to the great grief of Petrarch. He was succeeded in the government by his three nephews, Matthias, Barnabas, and Galeazzo, who divided his terri-

tories between them. Petrarch attached himself more especially to Galeazzo, who induced him to remain at Milan. In all matters of grave importance, Petrarch was the counsellor of the three brothers.

It was during his stay at Milan, before the emperor's adhesion to the league formed against the Visconti, that Petrarch received the emperor's reply to the appeal he had written to him two years previously from Padua. He immediately wrote an answer. There is a remarkable passage in this letter in allusion to Rienzi. "We have lately beheld at Rome," he says, "the accession to power of a man who was neither king nor consul, nor even a patrician—scarcely known as a Roman citizen. Though neither distinguished by titles, by descent, nor by his own virtues, he dared to declare himself the restorer of public liberty. What a noble title for so obscure a personage! Tuscany was the first to acknowledge him; the rest of Italy followed her example. Europe—nay, the whole world—expressed admiration. This is no invented tale: we have witnessed it with our own eyes. Already, justice, peace, good faith and security had returned; the vestiges of the golden age were appearing. In the most brilliant moment

of the success of his enterprise, he fell. * * * That man assumed only the title of Tribune, the head of the Roman dignities. If the name of Tribune did so much, what would not that of Cæsar be capable of?"

When Petrarch wrote the above, Rienzi was still a prisoner at Avignon. A fearful end was in store for him. Nemesis awaited him in the Capitol.

On the death of Clement, Stefanello Colonna and Bertaldo Orsini were senators of Rome. They were suspected of hoarding grain to their own profit, thereby creating a famine. The people rose on the 15th February, 1353, stoned Orsini to death, and would have killed Colonna, had he not effected his escape. A demagogue of the name of Baroncelli was elected Tribune.

Innocent VI. regarded Rienzi as a fitting man to restore order in Rome. He absolved him from all the charges brought against him; conferred upon him the dignity of Knight of the Roman Empire and the title of Senator, and bade him proceed without delay to restore the papal authority in the Holy City. At the same time he appointed Cardinal Albornoz, one of the greatest captains of the

day, his legate and commander-in-chief of the forces.[1]

In the month of August, 1353, the Cardinal Legate and Rienzi left Avignon together for Monte-Fiascone. The rapid success of the cardinal's arms, and the death of Baroncelli, massacred by the people, would have enabled him to establish the Pope's senator at Rome without delay, had he thought fit to do so. The submission of Rome to the Pope had made Rienzi useless, and the cardinal hesitated to reinstate him in power. Rienzi was aware of this. With his usual daring and self-reliance, he entered into secret negotiations with the brothers of the famous Montreal,[2] the leader of

[1] Egidio, or Gilio Albornoz, better known as Cardinal Albornoz, was born at Cuenca in New Castile, and claimed descent from the royal houses of Leon and Arragon. At a very early age, he was appointed Bishop of Toledo. He greatly distinguished himself in the wars against the Moors. After the famous battle of Tarifa, in which the Moors were completely routed, Alfonzo XI., King of Castile, requested to be dubbed a knight by the hand of Albornoz. He fought by the side of that monarch at the siege of Algerras. On the death of Alfonzo (1380), Albornoz proceeded to the court of Avignon, where he received the cardinal's hat from Clement VI., with the bishopric of Sabina. He died on the 24th August, 1367. The Pope having one day asked him for an account of the moneys he had spent in Italy, the warrior-monk sent him a cart-load of keys of the different cities and fortresses he had taken. "These are my accounts," he said: "thus has your money been employed." No more accounts were asked for.

[2] This celebrated leader of the Grand Company was a gentleman of Provence, a knight of St. John of Jerusalem, whence the appella-

the "Grand Company." They advanced him the sum of four thousand florins, and promised to join him with a small body of horse. Armed with the papal authority, Rienzi left the camp of Albornoz, and pushed on with all speed on Rome.

As soon as his approach was known, the citizens, forgetting his past errors, issued forth to welcome him with great acclamations. His entrance into Rome resembled the triumph of a conqueror. The Roman cavalry accompanied him from Monte Marc with olive branches in their hands. After seven years' wanderings and imprisonments, this man, who seemed predestined to govern, ruled supreme in Rome. His triumph, however, was of short duration. It was the brilliant light of a dying meteor that gleamed once more, brighter than ever, and

tion "Fra Moreale." He entered the service of the King of Hungary, in which he greatly distinguished himself by daring courage in the wars with Naples. He subsequently fought in various quarrels between the petty princes of Italy, somewhat in the manner of Dugald Dalgetty, fighting stoutly for those who paid him handsomely. In 1353, he turned freebooter, and was chosen captain of the Grand Company of Duke Werner, which he remodelled. With this army he levied black mail upon the cities and provinces of Italy. He joined the league of the cities against John Visconti, and acquired great wealth. He was traitorously executed by Rienzi. However valiant was Fra Moreale, the honest historian must place his name in the list of daring freebooters, and not side by side with the great captains of Italy.

then sank into eternal night amidst the ruins of imperial Rome.

The first act of the new Senator was to summon the nobles to swear allegiance. The grandson of Stephen Colonna, the head of the house since the disasters which had befallen it, though a mere lad, treated the summons with contempt, and shut himself up in his stronghold of Palæstrina. Rienzi resolved to lay siege to it, but an army was requisite, and to provide an army—money. To procure this he committed an act of treachery which has left a black stain upon his memory. He ordered Montreal, through whose assistance he had been enabled to enter Rome, to be arrested, declared guilty of pillage and murder, and decapitated: he then seized his treasures.[1] When Rienzi decreed the death of a Colonna or an Orsini, for the welfare of the "Good Estate," the Romans looked calmly on, or applauded; but the treacherous murder of Montreal, who was at Rome, as a guest of the senator, was revolting to their better feelings. The execution of Pandulfo de Pandulfucoi, a citizen universally esteemed, who had given

[1] Villani says, that Montreal was conspiring with the barons against Rienzi. This assertion weighs light as a feather against the expressed judgment of a whole people.

some trivial cause of offence to the Senator, exasperated the public mind still more. The imposition of a tax upon wine, and other articles to provide for the expenses of the army, brought to a crisis the indignation of the people, already sufficiently stimulated by the intrigues of the barons.

On the 8th October, 1354, the Roman people once more rose in revolt. They surrounded the palace in the Capitol with shouts of "Viva 'l populo! Mora 'l traditore! Mora! Mora 'l traditore che ha futta la gabella!—Long live the people! Death to the tyrant!" Rienzi was at least a brave man: girding on his sword, he took the Roman standard in his hand, and stepping forth upon the balcony of the palace, he endeavoured to address the infuriated multitude; and, says his unknown biographer, "had he been heard, the insurrection would have been quelled."[1] His voice was drowned in the shouts of his enemies; stones and missiles of every description were hurled at him. The gates of the palace were set on fire. He now sought to escape in disguise: dressed as a menial, his face blackened, he put a feather-bed upon his head

[1] "Ora voglio contare la morte del Tribuno."—*Vita di Cola di Rienzi*, vol. ii., p. 311.

and passed unrecognized through two of the gates, exclaiming in the Roman dialect, "Suso, suso a gliu traditore." At the outer gate he was stopped and recognized, and dragged to the Lion's stairs, where it had been his wont to pronounce sentence of death. Such was his noble bearing, that even then none durst touch him: he stood like a lion at bay for nearly an hour,[1] his arms crossed upon his breast, awaiting his fate. A dead silence having ensued, he made a movement as if to address the people, whereupon a man named Cecco del Vecchio passed his rapier through his body; a notary of the name of Treio struck the second blow. The cowardly mob then tore him literally to pieces. They cut off his head and feet, dragged the trunk through the mire, and hung it up outside a butcher's shop, where it remained suspended for two days and one night, when it was burnt.

Such, says Villani, was the untimely end of that Tribune who held out hopes of freedom to the Roman people. It is, perhaps, almost too much to call him—

"Redeemer of dark centuries of shame,
The friend of Petrarch—hope of Italy,
Rienzi, last of Romans."

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[1] Per meno di un ora.

CHAPTER VII.

Charles IV. enters Italy.—Revolution at Venice.—Execution of Marino Faliero.—Petrarch is sent as Ambassador to Prague.—The Battle of Poictiers.—The Emperor confers upon Petrarch the title of Count Palatine.—Boccacio visits Petrarch.—The Poet presents his library to the Republic of Venice.—Urban V.—Petrarch is again offered the post of Apostolic Secretary.—Leonzio Pilato.—Birth of a grandson.—The Pope resolves to return to Rome.—Joy of Petrarch.—Grief of the Cardinals.—Marriage of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, to Violante, daughter of Galeazzo Visconti.—Honour paid to Petrarch on that occasion.—Froissart present at the ceremony.—Death of Petrarch's grandson.—Petrarch's will.—He is taken ill at Ferrara.—He removes to Arqua.—Urban returns to Avignon.—Gregory XI.—Petrarch is sent as Ambassador to Venice.—His voice fails him.—Respect shown to him.—His death.

In the month of October, 1354, the emperor, in reply to the solicitations of the League formed against the Visconti, signified his resolution to visit Italy. As soon as Petrarch heard of this, he wrote a letter of congratulation to the emperor, and received in reply a pressing invitation from Charles to meet him. Petrarch joined him at Mantua, and in all probability took an active part in the negotiations between that prince, the leagued cities, and the Visconti. The result of these negotiations was peace. On the 4th of January, 1345, the emperor arrived

at Milan to receive the iron crown of Lombardy. The Visconti stipulated that he was to enter Milan with his suite, unarmed. The regal splendour of the Visconti's court, and the display of troops paraded to his honour, if not as a demonstration of power, caused no small astonishment to the emperor. He received the iron crown on the 6th of January ; the ceremony being performed in the church of St. Ambrogio.[1] Charles declared the three brothers, Visconti, his lieutenants, or vicars, for all their territories in Italy.

From Milan, Petrarch accompanied the emperor to Piacenza, but no inducement could persuade him to accompany him to Rome. Charles entered that city on the 2nd of April, and was crowned on the following Sunday, which was Easter Sunday. The emperor fulfilled to the letter the promises he had made to Clement VI. and Innocent VI.; he left Rome on the very evening of his coronation. This has not inappropriately been styled the epoch of the fall of the empire. Petrarch was indignant beyond measure at the pusillanimity of the emperor, and gave vent to his feelings in bitter

[1] "Hic in Ambrosii Basilicâ Cæsar noster adeptus ferream coronam."—Petr. *Lett.*

and sarcastic language. His indignation was not lessened by the emperor conferring upon Zanobi di Strata, a Siennese poet of some repute, the poet's crown, an honour hitherto exclusively enjoyed by Laura's lover. Charles hastened out of Italy as fast as he could, and was rejoiced to find himself once more in Germany, his pockets well lined with glittering gold, but his reputation somewhat tarnished.

The only benefit his visit procured to Italy, was the peace between Genoa and Venice, which latter city had in the meanwhile been the scene of a fearful tragedy.

On the 18th April, 1355, Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice, the successor of Andreas Dandolo, a venerable old man above eighty years of age, was decapitated before the assembled people. In a letter to his friend Gui Settimo,[1] Petrarch, who was personally acquainted with Marino Faliero,[2] gives a brief account of this event :—"This supreme chief, venerated almost with religious worship at Venice, was dragged like a slave to that celebrated spot, where the highest honours had been conferred upon his triumphant predecessors ; there, after being

[1] *Epist. Variarum, Ep.* 18.

[2] "Mihi familiariter natus."

stripped of the insignia of his rank, the executioner struck off his head from his body. His blood stained the atrium of the palace [1] and the steps of that noble staircase of marble, consecrated to great festivals, and often decked with the spoils taken from the enemies of Venice." Petrarch distinctly states that the execution took place on the 18th of April.[2]

The old Doge, as the story goes, had a pretty wife, who played him false. Michael Steno, a young Venetian nobleman, owing the Doge a grudge, had the rashness to write in large letters above the ducal chair some words derogatory to the Doge's dignity.[3] The incensed old man demanded vengeance of the Council of Forty, who, taking into consideration the youth of the offender, sentenced him to two months' imprisonment, and one year's banishment from Venice. The Doge, incensed at what he considered an inadequate punishment, entered into a conspiracy to exterminate the nobles and make himself dictator. The plot being discovered, he was tried, found guilty, and decapitated. In the

[1] "Palatii aditum."

[2] "Locum signavi, tempus signo. Annus est ab ortu Christi MCCCLV. dies fuit xiiii. Cal. Mayi."—Petr., *Ep.* 18, *Variarum.*

[3] "Marino Faliero della bella moglie; altri la gode, ed egli la mantiene."

noble hall of the ducal palace at Venice, portraits of all the Doges hang round the wall. A black board with the inscription, "Hic est locus Marini Falerio, decapitati pro criminibus," denotes the place that would have been allotted to his portrait.

In the commencement of 1356, a report was spread in Italy, that Louis, King of Hungary, purposed invading the Venetian territory with a powerful army, and that, moreover, he had entered into a league with the emperor and the Duke of Austria for the subjugation of Tuscany, which was to be erected into a kingdom. The first part only of the report was true; nevertheless, the Visconti thought it advisable to send an ambassador to the emperor to sound his intentions. Petrarch was selected for this mission.

The poet arrived at Prague in July, where he found the emperor absorbed in his Golden Bull, which had just been presented to the princes of the empire at the diet of Nuremberg.[1] Petrarch returned to Milan in September. Shortly after his return, a courier arrived with

[1] The Golden Bull consists of thirty articles respecting the privileges of the princes, electors, the regulations for the election of emperor, coronation, &c. The original is preserved at Frankfort-on-the-Maine.

the news of the battle of Poictiers, the defeat of King John of France, and the captivity of the French monarch. Galeazzo Visconti, who was a personal friend of King John, requested Petrarch to write two letters,—one to the Dauphin, the other to the Cardinal de Boulogne, expressive of his grief at the reverse sustained by the French arms. Petrarch declared his unbounded astonishment at this great victory. "It is," he exclaimed, "unexampled in history. The most powerful of monarchs has been vanquished and made prisoner by an enemy much less in number."[1]

In 1357, the emperor conferred upon Petrarch the dignity of Count Palatine of the Holy Roman Empire.

A lover of solitude, Petrarch left Milan for a country house on the banks of the Adda, about three miles from the city. He thus describes, in a letter to his friend, Gui Settimo,[2] the course of his life. "Like a way-worn traveller, I mend my pace as I approach the goal. I am constantly, day and night, reading and writing: one occupation relieves the other. Whatever be

[1] "Quod inopinabile apud vos, apud vos inauditum regem longè maximum, longè impar hostis in vincula traxit!"—Petr. *Lett.*

[2] Created shortly afterwards Archbishop of Genoa.

the success of my labours, I trust that God will not abandon me in my old age." It was here, in 1358, that Petrarch wrote his treatise entitled, "A Remedy against Good and Bad Fortune," which was written for and dedicated to his friend Azon, Lord of Corregio.

In 1359, Petrarch received a visit from Boccacio, then in his forty-eighth year. The author of the Decamerone somewhat shocked Petrarch by his dissolute habits; and the poet undertook the task of reforming him, and in some measure succeeded. This conversion is the subject of Boccacio's "Philostratus."[1]

On his return to Florence, Boccacio sent Petrarch a handsome copy of Dante's "Divine Comedy," which he (Boccacio) had copied with his own hand.[2]

The friend and intimate adviser of the Visconti, Petrarch held a high position at their court. The reduced circumstances of the French king induced Galeazzo Visconti to demand the hand of his daughter Isabella for his son Giovanni Galeazzo. The offer was accepted on the

[1] "Pro Philostrato ego intelligo gloriosum præceptorem meum Franciscum Petrarcam, cujus monitis sapissime mihi persuasum est, ut omissa rerum temporalium delectatione mentem ad æterna dirigerem, et sic amores meos, etsi non planè, satis tamen vertit ad melius."—*Extract from a Letter of* Boccaccio.

[2] This copy is preserved in the Vatican.

condition of the payment of six hundred thousand florins. Isabella of France entered Milan on the 8th October, 1360, and the nuptials were celebrated with great magnificence.

On the liberation of King John,[1] Petrarch was sent as ambassador to Paris, to congratulate him on the part of Galeazzo Visconti. Petrarch was admitted to the intimacy of the French monarch, who used every persuasion to induce him to remain permanently at Paris, but in vain. Petrarch returned to Milan in February, 1361.

In this year Italy was visited by the plague. The ravages this scourge committed at Milan caused that capital to be deserted. Petrarch sought a refuge at Padua. Two domestic events, the death of his son Giovanni, and the marriage of his daughter Francesca, occurred in this year.

On a pressing invitation from the emperor, who had returned to Milan, he left that city for Germany. The high roads, however, were so infested with banditti, that he relinquished the idea of crossing the mountains, and paid a visit to Venice. He was so well pleased with his sojourn there, that he offered to bequeath his valuable collection of manuscripts to the city,

[1] By the peace of Bretigny, 8th May, 1360.

if the republic would provide a fitting place for their preservation, and give him a domicile. The offer was joyfully accepted. The Palazzo Molina, a large building, with two high towers, commanding a view of the port, was assigned to him for himself and his library.

Whilst arranging his new establishment, a courier arrived at Venice with the intelligence of the death of Pope Innocent VI., which took place on the 12th September, 1362.

His successor was Guillaume Grimvard, Abbé of Marseilles, who is known to history as Urban V. One of the first acts of the new pontiff was to offer Petrarch the post of Apostolic Secretary, Petrarch again firmly but respectfully declined the proffered dignity.

In 1363, he received another visit from his friend Boccacio, who was accompanied to Venice by a Greek, Leonzio Pilato, a man, according to Boccacio's description, of repugnant aspect and horrible features. He wore a long tangled beard, matted—as was his black, uncombed hair. He shunned all society. He possessed, however, a perfect knowledge of the language and literature of the Greeks, and was a pupil of the celebrated Barlaam. Boccacio took lessons from him, and procured a professor's chair for him at the

University of Florence, where for two years he expounded the works of Homer.[1] Leonzio translated that great poet into Latin. The revival of Greek literature in Italy is owing in a great measure to him, and to the encouragement he received from the two illustrious Florentines.

Boccacio remained at Venice a guest of Petrarch during the months of June, July, and August. He then returned to Florence, leaving Pilato at Venice, who was desirous of embarking for Constantinople. The scholar had scarcely landed in Turkey, when he reimbarked for Italy. A storm arose ; the vessel was struck by lightning, and the scorched body of Leonzio was committed to the deep. Petrarch, in a letter to Boccacio, regrets his death, but rejoices that his effects were saved, amongst which were many valuable Greek manuscripts.

In 1365, the republic of Florence, desirous of possessing so illustrious a citizen, solicited the Pope to confer a canonicate at Florence upon Petrarch. The Pope consulted the poet on the subject. The latter, though an Italian patriot, nourished no particular affection for a republic

[1] For an interesting account of Leonzio Pilato, *vide* Tiraboschi, *Storia della Litteratura Italiana*, vol. v., p. 401.

which had banished Dante and his father, and accepted instead the canonry of Carpentras, where he had prosecuted his early studies.

In 1366, there were great rejoicings at Venice in the Palazzo Molina. Petrarch's daughter presented her husband with a son, who received the name of Francesco. The joy of Petrarch at the birth of his grandson was unbounded.

The wish to behold the papal court re-established at Rome haunted Petrarch's mind, and became an absorbing idea with him. The policy of Urban renewed within him the hope of seeing that great wish fulfilled. On the 28th June, 1366, he addressed a long letter to the Pope, urging him in eloquent language to transfer his court to the Eternal City.[1] This letter was well received by Urban, and created no small sensation at Avignon. How far it may have been instrumental in inducing the Pope to visit Rome, it is difficult to say. Shortly afterwards, Urban sent messengers to the capital of Christendom, to prepare the Quirinal for his reception, announcing his intention of taking

[1] This letter covers eighteen closely-printed quarto pages of Latin in the complete edition of Petrarch's works.—*Ep. de Senilibus*, lib., vii., Ep. i.

up his quarters there on the Easter following.[1] Many of the cardinals shed tears at the idea of quitting France. One of the causes of their grief was, that there was no Burgundy in Italy![2] Notwithstanding the opposition of the reverend fathers, and the earnest solicitations of the French King, Urban V. left Avignon on the 30th April, 1367, for Marseilles. On the 19th May he embarked in a Venetian galley. He was accompanied by a fleet of many sail, consisting of vessels sent expressly by the Queen of Naples, the Venetians, the Genoese, and the Pisans. At the moment of embarkation, five cardinals refused to accompany him, and returned to Avignon.

He remained a few days at Genoa, and on 9th of June arrived at Viterbo, where he received the homage of the Princes of Italy. A deputation from Rome presented him with the keys of the city and the castle of St. Angelo. Urban made his solemn entrance into Rome amidst the acclamations of the people.

Petrarch was at Venice when tidings of these events reached him. In the exultation of his heart, he seized his pen, and indited a congratu-

[1] It was agreed between Charles IV. and Urban, that they should act in concert in Italy to put down the petty tyrants.—*Sismondi.*

[2] *Petr.*, Letter to Urban V.

latory epistle to Urban, commencing with the quotation from the Psalms—"In exitu Israel de Ægypto, domus Jacob de populo barbaro."[1]

On the pressing invitation of Galeazzo Visconti, Petrarch proceeded, in May, 1368, to Milan, to act as mediator between that prince and the Pope, who had raised a powerful league against him.[2] Galeazzo had, however, another reason for desiring the presence of Petrarch: he wished Italy's greatest poet to be present at the marriage of his daughter Violante with Lionel, Duke of Clarence, second son of Edward III. of England.[3] Already connected by marriage with the royal house of France, an alliance with that of England was an object of Galeazzo's ambition. Violante was to receive two hundred thousand florins as her dower, and the sovereignty of five cities in Piedmont.[4]

The Duke of Clarence left England with a gallant suite of nobles. At Paris he was lodged at the Louvre, where a series of fêtes was given

[1] Eleven and a half quarto pages of Latin.—*De senilibus*, liber ix., Ep. i.

[2] This league was the last political act of Albornoz. It was signed in July, 1367, at Viterbo, between the Pope, the Emperor, the King of Hungary, and the Lords of Padua, Ferrara and Mantua.

[3] *Vide* reign of Edward III. Also Rymer, vol. vi., p. 564.

[4] Alba, Cuneo, Cerastro, Mondovi, and Braida.

in his honour. The king loaded him with presents, and ordered the Dukes of Berry and Burgundy to escort him some distance on his way. On the 17th May he made his entrance into Milan.

Galeazzo Visconti received him at the head of a splendid retinue of knights and nobles. His wife, Blanche of Savoy, and Isabella of France, his daughter-in-law, at the head of a cavalcade of eighty ladies, magnificently dressed in cloth of gold, were splendidly conspicuous in the cortège. The marriage ceremony was performed on the 15th of June, at the church of St. Maria Maggiore. On this occasion Galeazzo gave a sumptuous banquet in the courtyard of his palace. As a mark of the esteem in which he held Petrarch, the poet's seat was placed at the table of honour reserved for princes of the blood royal—a noble example of distinction, publicly awarded to genius. Froissart was in the suite of the Duke of Clarence. He was then a young man unknown to fame.[1]

It was Petrarch's lot to outlive nearly all those who were most dear to him. One by one they were cut off by the unrelenting hand of

[1] Froissart gives an account of the festivities which took place on the journey of the Duke of Clarence.

death. Whilst he was attending the festivities at Milan, his little grandson died at Padua. The child was a great favourite of his, and bore a striking resemblance to him. Petrarch was much grieved at the loss. He ordered a marble monument to be erected to its memory, on which he had the following twelve lines engraved in golden characters :—

" Vix mundi novus hospes eram, vitæque volantis
Attigeram tenero limina dura pede
Franciscus genitor, genetrix Francesca, secutus
Hos de fonte sacro nomen idem tenui.
Infans, formosus, solamen dulce parentum,
Nunc dolor, hoc uno sors mea læta minus
Cætera sum felix et veræ gaudia vitæ
Nactus et æternæ, tam cito, tam facile.
Sol bis, luna quater flexum peragraverat orbem,
Obvia mors, fallor, obvia vita fuit,
Me Venetum terris dedit urbs, rapuitque Papia.
Nec queror hinc cœlo restituendus eram."

Francesco di Brossano had also a daughter, who, like her brother, is said to have borne a remarkable likeness to the poet. She lived to be married, and had issue.

Petrarch was very desirous of visiting Urban at Rome, the Pope having repeatedly sent him pressing invitations, but the hand of time began already to weigh heavily upon him. He spent nearly the whole of the winter of 1369 in

making preparations for his journey, and on the 14th April, 1370, he took the precaution of making his will, a copy of which is published in many editions of his works. Having performed this act of duty, he finally set out upon his journey; but he had overrated his strength. At Ferrara he was taken seriously ill, so much so, that his life was despaired of. Nicholas d'Este received him into his palace, where every attention was paid to him. It is to the tender care of that prince that Petrarch attributed his recovery.

In despite of his medical advisers, the poet wished to continue his journey to Rome; but though the spirit was strong, the body was weak. He at last relinquished the idea. He was so feeble that a litter was constructed, upon which he was conveyed in a barge to Padua, where his return excited no less joy than surprise, rumours of his death having been circulated. To re-establish his health, Petrarch removed to Arqua, a village about eight miles from Padua, and most pleasantly situated at the foot of the Euganean hills, and sheltered from the cold blasts of the north wind. There, in a small villa, surrounded by vineyards and orchards, Petrarch sought that repose of which he stood so much in need. His pen,

however, was not idle. It was here that he wrote his treatise, "De ignorantiâ sui ipsius et multorum." The origin of this treatise is curious.

Whilst residing at Venice, Petrarch was disgusted at the philosophical theories promulgated by the young men of that city. Adopting the philosophy of Aristotle, they spoke in the most disrespectful terms of religion. Petrarch publicly expressed his disapprobation, and was not sparing of his censure. At a meeting held by these heathen youths, they decided that Petrarch was "virum bonum sine literis"—a good, well-meaning man, but of little learning—a sentence which—trivial as it was, emanating from such a quarter—caused some sensation at Venice. It aroused the indignation of Boccacio and other friends of the poet, who shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the whole affair. His friends took the matter more to heart, and induced him to write the treatise in question.

The salubrious air of Arqua did not, apparently, confer much benefit upon the invalid, who suffered continually from intermittent fever. The news of the sudden and unexpected return of the Pope to Avignon, which took place on the 24th September, 1370, was a cause of great

annoyance to him, and contributed greatly to retard his convalescence. The pretext for Urban's return to Avignon was his desire to conclude a peace between England and France. It is more probable that he did not feel safe among the turbulent Italians. However this may be, scarcely had he set foot in Avignon, when he was attacked by a mortal malady, which terminated in his death on the 19th December following. Feeling his last hour approach, Urban ordered the gates of his palace to be thrown open, that the people might witness the death of a good Christian. Dressed in the habit of the order of St. Benedict, stretched upon a low couch, surrounded by a multitude, died Pope Urban V.

The successor to the papal chair was Cardinal Pierre Roger, a nephew of Clement VI. He was proclaimed pope under the title of Gregory XI., on the 31st December, 1370.

Petrarch was desirous of visiting Gregory, who had sent him a pressing invitation; but a severe attack of illness in the May following compelled him to relinquish the idea of so long a journey. Petrarch was now fast approaching the goal of his mortal career. His mind, powerful as ever, was soon to burst through its

earthly tenement, and soar to a higher sphere. The framework was fast decaying in which that precious gem was set—one of the brightest jewels that ever graced the diadem of Italy. Honours had been showered thickly upon him; and even now, when the waters of his life were fast ebbing away to leave his corpse upon the barren shore of Death, his powerful voice was once more invoked to mediate between two contending states of his unhappy country.

Venice and Padua were at war, the latter faring the worst. Francesco di Carrara, Lord of Padua, requested Petrarch to proceed as his ambassador to Venice to negotiate a peace. Accompanied by the son of the prince, and a brilliant suite, Petrarch arrived at Venice on the 27th September, 1372. On the day after his arrival, he was admitted to a public audience of the Senate. He rose to speak; but a sudden faintness came over him; his memory failed him, and, for the first time, his tongue refused to do its office. The Senate respectfully adjourned to the following day, when he made a most brilliant discourse. The result of his embassy was the conclusion of peace between the two states.

On his return from Venice, the health of the

poet declined rapidly. An intermittent fever allowed him but few intervals of repose. He made no alteration in his diurnal occupations, passing the greater part of the day at his desk, reading or writing; but it does not appear that he was occupied with any particular subject. He kept up an active correspondence with his friends, more especially with Boccacio. One of his last letters was addressed to this friend, and he expresses in it his admiration of the story of Griselda, in the "Decamerone," which he had committed to memory, and purposed translating into Latin.

On the 18th July, 1374, Petrarch was found dead in his library, his head resting upon a book he had been reading. His death was like a serene Italian night after a quiet summer's evening; his sun had set amidst purple and golden tints; the veil of darkness had imperceptibly stolen over his horizon, and the star of his fame now rose in celestial brightness to shed its light over his tomb.

The news of his death soon spread through Arqua, Padua, and the neighbouring towns and villages. From all quarters noble and peasant flocked to Arqua, to render a tribute to departed genius. Francesco di Carrara and his entire

court attended the obsequies. The ceremony was performed by the bishops and a full chapter. Wrapped in a crimson mantle, the robe of the canons of Padua, the mortal remains of Petrarch were borne to the parish church of Arqua on a bier, covered with cloth of gold and ermine. After a funeral oration by a friend of the deceased—Buonaventura di Peraga, prior of the order of the St. Augustins — the body was interred in a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin, which Petrarch had caused to be erected in his lifetime.

Some time afterwards his son-in-law, Francesco di Brossano, erected a red marble sarcophagus, supported by four columns, opposite the church of Arqua, and had the body transferred there. The following inscription was engraven upon it :—

"Frigida Francisci tegit hic lapis ossa Petrarcæ.
Suscipe, Virgo parens, animam : fate, Virgine, parce ;
Fessaque jam terris cœli requiescat in arce.
MC.CC.LXXIIII. XVIII. Julii.

The basement of the columns bears the following inscription :—

"Viro insigni Francisco Petrarcæ Laureato, Franciscus de Brossano Mediolanensis, gener, individua conversazione, amore, propinquitate et successione memoria."

In 1667, Paolo Valdazucchi, the proprietor of

Petrarch's house at Arqua, caused a bronze bust of the poet to be placed upon the mausoleum.[1]

Thus lived and died Francesco Petrarca, the estimation of whose loss is thus eloquently summed up in two lines by Sacchetti :—

"Festa ne fa il Ciel, piange la terra
Duolsene il purgator, stride l'Inferno."

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[1] *Vide* Appendix.

CHAPTER VIII.

Review of Petrarch's writings.—His influence on the age in which he lived.—Revival of Greek Literature.—Dante and Petrarch compared. His Latin compositions.—His poem "Africa."—Eclogues.—His letters.—His "Trionfo."—English translation.

THE name of Petrarch is as inseparably connected with that of Laura, as his fame with his sonnets. He himself entertained but an indifferent opinion of his verses: he wrote them, he tells us, in the days of youthful error, and he received the highest reward that could be conferred upon a poet for an incomplete epic poem, which few men could now peruse with pleasure. But the Italians generally, even in the poet's lifetime, appreciated those melodious rhymes (his sonnets), which flowed so softly, that even the most grave could not refrain from repeating them. Petrarch became aware of this, and devoted much time in revising them. In one of his later sonnets he exclaims:—

"Se io avessi pensato che si care
Fossin le voci de' sospir 'mici in rima
Fatto l'avrei del sospirar mio prima
In numero più spesse in stil più rare."

His love for Laura partook largely of what may be styled "ideal worship." Laura was an idol placed upon a column of his own fancy, round which his luxuriant verse entwined itself like a rich evergreen.

The contrast between the poetry of Dante and Petrarch is happily expressed by Ugo Foscolo in his parallel between the two poets. "The conflict of opposite purposes *thrills* in the heart of Petrarch, and *battles* in the brain of Dante." Petrarch knows how to arouse all the tender emotions of the heart. Dante has the key of the sublimer aspirations of the soul.

As we have said in the preceding chapter, Italy and the whole world are indebted to Petrarch for the preservation of valuable manuscripts of the Latin and Greek classics, which would otherwise have been eternally lost. The revival of Greek literature in Italy is chiefly due to the encouragement it received from himself and his friend, Boccacio.

The influence exercised by Petrarch upon his contemporaries was extraordinary. His epistolary correspondence is something enormous,

yet many of his letters have not been printed. He corresponded (chiefly in Latin) with nearly all the popes, princes, and literary men of the fourteenth century, with senates and republics, exhorting them or upbraiding them, as the case might be. His letters were regarded in that day as masterpieces of eloquence and correct style; they passed from hand to hand, and were copied and carefully preserved. "The name alone of Petrarch," says Sismondi, in his history of the Italian Republics, "was equivalent to a POWER; and his letters, always eloquent, but often daring, in which he exhorted the Pope to return to Rome, circulated throughout the whole of Europe."

"Petrarch," says Tiraboschi, "was a poet, an orator, a philosopher, a geographer, a historian, and an antiquary in all the sciences; and in every science he had imitators and disciples. He engendered in the breasts of others that enthusiasm for the glory of his country which animated his own."

Pre-eminent among his Latin compositions is a treatise on "A Remedy for good and bad fortune."[1] It is dedicated to his patron, Azzo da Correggio, and originated in the misfortunes

[1] *De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*—247 quarto pages of Latin.

of his friend. Azzo having obtained, in 1341,[1] the sovereignty of Parma, was, in his turn, driven out, in 1345, by Obizzon d'Este. He was subsequently compelled to fly from Verona, and lost all his lands ; his wife and children were cast into prison, and until the day of his death he was indeed the child of misfortune. In this treatise, which is in the form of a dialogue, in which Joy, Hope, Reason, Sorrow, and Fear are the interlocutors, Petrarch endeavours to console his friend.

"We pass," says Petrarch, "the first years of our life in darkness and ignorance, the following in trouble and labour, the last in sorrow—all of them in error. There never was an entire day with a clear sky free from clouds. If we investigate honestly, we shall confess that it is we ourselves who are at fault. Fortune wars against us ; Virtue alone can render us victorious in the combats we have to maintain ; if we desert her colours the battle is no longer equal ; Fortune mocks us, and sends us spinning round in her wheel, now up, now down, according to her pleasure. Our folly and neglect are chiefly to blame."

The treatise we have spoken of is divided into

[1] *Vide* Sismondi, *Hist. des Rep. Ital.*, vol. iv., p. 163.

two books. In the first book, Hope and Joy, the daughters of Prosperity, present to the mind all those allurements and pleasures likely to intoxicate and seduce it. Reason demonstrates the fallacy of their arguments. In the second book, Fear and Sorrow, daughters of Adversity, pass in review the evils and sorrows of life. Reason proves that these evils are only imaginary—that they are not without their remedy, and that much good may be derived from them.[1]

Two books on "Solitude"[2] were written by Petrarch when, disgusted with the vices of the court at Avignon, he withdrew to his retreat at Vaucluse. He speaks of the men at court as bears and tigers, and declares the solitude of rocks and trees preferable to their company. "If we wish to commune with God," he exclaims, "or with our own hearts, or if we desire to prosecute our studies, or to cultivate our minds, we must leave far behind us the haunts of men and the hum of cities." The second book contains a curious enumeration of all the illustrious personages who loved solitude, from Adam downwards. Zimmerman has adopted portions of this work.

[1] "This treatise contains the best and most opportune advice that can be given on the subject."—*Tiraboschi.*

[2] *De Vitâ Solitariâ*—131 pages quarto of Latin.

A Latin treatise "De otio religiosorum," comprises a comparison between the joys of religious retirement and worldly pursuits.[1]

Two dialogues, entitled "De verâ sapientiâ," are satires upon those who deem themselves learned in their own estimation, either because they have taken some degree, or read a certain number of books, and look down with a self-complacent patronage, bordering upon contempt, on men of genius not so smoothly worded as themselves. The dialogue is supposed to take place in the forum at Rome, between an idiot and an orator.

Another dialogue, entitled "De contemptu mundi," is written on the plan of the Confessions of St. Augustin. Petrarch unbosoms himself to St. Augustin. He examines his own failings; he professes the purity of his love for Laura. It is probable that this treatise was found among his papers, and made public after his death.

A treatise "De republicâ optimè administrandâ," dedicated to his kind friend Francesco di Carrara, Lord of Padua, is interesting in so much as it embodies Petrarch's views on government.

[1] Forty quarto pages.

In the preceding chapter, his treatise "De ignorantiâ sui ipsius et multorum" has been alluded to. Numerous miscellaneous works on divers subjects swell the list of his Latin compositions. Some violent invectives against the medical profession; a treatise on the duties of an emperor; a collection of memorable events from ancient and modern history; sketches of the lives of illustrious Romans; travels in Syria and the Holy Land, may be enumerated among others.

His letters in Latin prose, which have been published, occupy nearly five hundred quarto pages; his letters in Latin hexameters cover fifty pages. In his letters, Petrarch narrates the chief events of his life with great minuteness. It is from them that the materials were taken for the preceding chapter.

Petrarch's Latin poem "Africa," in which he endeavoured to emulate Virgil, is a history of the Punic war, and the adventures of the elder Scipio.

The first book contains the argument or invocation, the causes which led to the second Punic war, and a dedication to Robert King of Naples. In a dream, Scipio beholds his father Publius Scipio. This dream, or vision, is continued into

the second book, where he makes inquiries respecting the ultimate result of the war. Publius predicts the triumph of Rome, and the fall of Carthage; he foretells how Rome, gorged with the spoils of conquered cities, will sink into an apoplectic state, and groan under the sway of an ambitious citizen. In the third book, Scipio sends Lælius, his admiral, into Africa as his ambassador to Syphax, to induce that monarch to enter into an alliance with Rome. We have an elegant description of the court of the Numidian king. The Roman ambassador is invited to a splendid banquet, at which a youthful bard sings the origin of the proud city of Carthage. Lælius, in his turn, pourtrays in vivid language the great deeds of Rome, and depicts in glowing colours the death of Lucretia, and the shout of liberty which was raised in the Roman capital. The third book concludes without the real action of the poem having commenced. This is the great blemish of the poem.

In the fourth book, Lælius narrates the chief events in the life of Scipio, and we have a description of the siege and storming of Carthage. In the fifth book the reader is introduced to the court of Syphax. The alliance with Rome is declined, and Syphax is van-

quished. Scipio takes possession of the capital of Numidia, and we are treated with a tragic episode in the death of Sophonisba, the wife of Syphax, who, from love to Massinissa (a Numidian prince who had joined the Romans to win her), and from fear of being led a captive to Rome, poisons herself.

Alfieri has selected this subject for one of his tragedies. There is a gap in the poem, as no account is given of the battle which preceded the siege and capture of Cirta. The rest of the poem is consistent with history, so that the reader, being aware of all that is to ensue, loses all interest in the plot.

Petrarch's Latin eclogues are important, referring, as they do, to historical personages. Thus, in the sixth eclogue, St. Peter, under the name of Pamfilo, reproves Pope Clement VI. for leading a life of luxurious repose. In the seventh, the dialogue is carried on between Mitio and the nymph Epi, the latter representing the city of Avignon. They count their flock, each sheep being no less than a most reverend cardinal, among which flock they find no small number of black sheep.

The object Petrarch had in view when he wrote his "Triumphs,"[1] was to pay homage to

[1] *Trionfi in Vita ed in Morte di Madonna Laura.*

the memory of Laura. He describes the origin, progress, and termination of his love. These "Triumphs" are descriptive of man in his various stages of youth, manhood, and old age: they afford the poet fitting opportunities of introducing himself and his mistress.

Man, in his youth, is the victim of passions; as he grows older, Reason bids him resist them; he subdues them by Chastity. Death terminates the struggle; but Fame outlives Death. Thus, the poet describes the triumph of Love over man, of Chastity over Love, and the triumph of Death over both. Fame outlives Death, Time triumphs over Fame, and Eternity triumphs over Time.

We have many admirable English translations of *some* of Petrarch's sonnets,—by Merivale, Boyd, Lady Dacre, Milman, and others. Some scarcely admit of translation, or, if translated, the "conceits" would be utterly lost. The English language is not so pliant as the softer Italian: it does not permit that rich cadence which falls like music on the ear, and of which Petrarch was a perfect master. Harmony may be interpreted, but not translated.

CHAPTER IX.

Boccacio.—Points of resemblance between Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio.—Protection afforded to Literature by the Princes of Italy.—Biographical sketch.—Aversion of Boccacio to commerce.—He studies law under Cino di Pistoja.—A visit to the tomb of Virgil.—He falls in love with the daughter of the King of Naples.—Fiammetta.—Florence.—He is sent as Ambassador of the Florentine Republic to Ravenna.—His mission to the Emperor.—He is despatched as Ambassador to Rome.—The Decamerone.—His friendship with Petrarch.—His conversion.—He devotes himself to the study of Greek Literature.—Assisted by Leonzio Pilato, he translates the Iliad.—He visits Petrarch at Venice.—Petrarch's daughter.—He is taken ill.—He gives public lectures on Dante's poem at Florence.—His death.

THE literature of Italy offers the remarkable instance of three great writers appearing almost contemporaneously, each eminent in his own sphere, and yet the fame of the one did not eclipse the glory of the other. The three fathers of Italian Literature—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio—form a noble triumvirate. The fourteenth century, the famous "*Trecento*," is the most brilliant era in the literary annals of Italy; it was then that was laid the key-stone of the arch, the foundation of the language:—

> "That music in itself, whose sounds are song,
> The poetry of speech."——

A point which cannot fail to strike the observant reader, is the protection which the princes of Italy accorded to men of letters, even in the midst of strife and bloodshed. Popes, emperors, kings, and princes eagerly sought the society of, and awarded the place of honour to men of genius, whose friendship they courted. The sovereign power of intellect was acknowledged, and the hereditary nobility of rank held out a fraternal hand to the self-created nobility of talent. Due honour, therefore, to the princes of Italy.

There are many points of resemblance in the lives of these three great men. All were Tuscans; all have immortalized their mistresses in prose and verse; the names of Beatrice, Laura, and Fiammetta will descend hand-in-hand, a graceful group, to the remotest ages. All, likewise, were patriots.

The Literature of Italy may be compared to a noble river; it may be traced from its very source, and followed in all its turns and windings: its rich and limpid waters reflect now the passions, the loves, the joys—now the sorrows, the wrongs of Italy. All her eminent writers have been, more or less, political characters; from Dante to Macchiavelli, from

Macchiavelli to Massimo d'Azeglio, their writings have been the mirrors of the times in which they lived. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio, form the clasp of a chain consisting of many links, great and small, of higher or lesser value, which constitutes the Literature of Italy.

The birth of Boccacio is involved in mystery. His father was an opulent Tuscan merchant, originally of Certaldo, in the Val d'Elsa, situated about twenty miles from Florence.[1] Called to Paris on business of importance, he there made the acquaintance of a young Frenchwoman, who, in the year 1313, presented him with a son, whom he christened Giovanni; the mother died shortly afterwards. This son, Giovanni, was the author of the "Decamerone." Boccacio was consequently nine years younger than Petrarch.

The father of Boccacio returned to Florence with his son. When the boy had attained his seventh year, his parent placed him under the tuition of Giovanni da Strada, the father of Zanobi da Strada, who received the poet's crown from the Emperor Charles IV. It was by no means the intention of the elder Boccacio to

[1] "Certaldo, castello nel territorio Fiorentino nella Valdelsa dilungi dalla città di Firenze miglia venti, pregiato è per over dato a questa patria una famiglia ben chiara, qual si è quella, da cui nacque il celebratissimo Giovanni Boccacio."—*Manni,* ch. ii.

make a poet or an orator of his son; on the contrary, he was desirous of seeing him settle down steadily to business, with which object in view he gave him a high stool in his counting-house. The youth, however, spent more time in writing verses than in casting up accounts, for which he evinced a peculiar aversion. A visit to Naples, on his father's business, decided the bent of his inclinations.

Among the princes of the fourteenth century, who distinguished themselves as patrons of literature, Robert, King of Naples, holds a prominent place. His court (from 1309 to 1343) was not only one of the most brilliant, but one of the most learned of the age; indeed, Robert was the Mecænas of the fourteenth century. Petrarch, in his letters, is lavish in his praise of this monarch; and all the Italian historians coincide in the opinion he has expressed.[1]

Provided with letters of recommendation, and with ample means, Boccacio soon became a favourite with the young men of that gay court, into whose society he was thrown. Excursions of pleasure in the environs of Naples, so rich in

[1] "Italy, nay, the whole world, possesses one competent guide of genius in the person of Robert, King of Naples. Happy Naples! to whom Fortune granted the possession of the greatest ornament of our age."—Petrarch, *Lett. Fam. Ep.*, book i.

classical recollections, and the society of men of literary taste, saved him from being utterly whirled away by dissipation—his ardent mind acknowledged nobler aspirations. Visiting one day the tomb of Virgil, the *genius loci* worked upon him—the spirit of poetry rose within his breast. The enthusiastic youth knelt at the tomb of the Mantuan, and took a vow to bid an eternal farewell to the beaten track of commerce, and to follow the wandering steps of the muses. He wrote to his father informing him of his resolution: after some demur, but perceiving that it would be vain to attempt to shake the resolution of his son, old Boccacio consented to allow him to study the law, and articled him to Cino di Pistoja.

The law proved to possess as few attractions as commerce to our young Boccacio; his time was almost exclusively devoted to the study of poetry, or in the writing of verses; or was spent in the society of the eminent men who visited Cino, himself a poet of no mean pretensions. As we have already stated, Boccacio had now attained his twenty-eighth year.[1] His favourite authors were Virgil, Horace, and Dante. The love of poetry was still further developed in him

[1] Tiraboschi.

by an ardent passion for the natural daughter of King Robert.[1]

On the Saturday before Easter, and in the year 1341, Boccacio was attending high mass in the church of St. Lorenzo, at Naples, when he was struck by the beauty of a young lady in the church; he followed her to her home, where he learnt that she was the natural daughter of the king, the wife of a person holding a high office at court, and that her name was Maria. Unlike the chaste Laura, this fair lady responded to the love of Boccacio. He has celebrated her in his works under the name of Fiammetta.

Manni describes the personal appearance of Boccacio at this period, as tall and stout, with a round face, and a nose slightly aquiline; lips, if anything, thick, but finely chiselled, a well-moulded chin, and an agreeable smile.

Despite of his dissipated habits, the mind of Boccacio was cast in a manly mould; his love did not prevent him from prosecuting deeper studies than the art of poetry. Though his leisure hours were partially spent in penning

[1] Boccacio himself states this; and gives an account of his first beholding Maria (Fiammetta) in the 1st Book of the "Filocopo," and again in the 1st Chap. of the "Fiammetta." In the former he describes how he was inthralled; in the latter the lady describes the effect produced on her by the young Tuscan.—Manni, *Storia del Decamerone.*

verses to his mistress, much of his time was passed in the society of the learned men who frequented the court of Naples. His "Teseide," "Fiammetta," and "Filocopo," were written at Naples. They are so many monuments to his mistress, erected during his sojourn at that capital.

On the death of his father, he returned to Florence. His reputation, as a poet and a man of letters, had preceded him; he soon rose high in the esteem of his fellow-citizens; at different times the senate entrusted him with missions of the highest importance. We have already seen that he was sent, in the year 1351, to offer Petrarch a chair at the University of Florence, and to inform him that his native city had restored his civil rights.[1] In 1350, he was sent as ambassador to the court of Ravenna. On his return from his mission to Petrarch, he was despatched in the same capacity to Louis of Brandenburg, the object being to induce that monarch to join the league against the Visconti. In 1353, he was sent as ambassador to the court of Avignon, to consult with Pope Innocent VI., as to how Florence should receive the Emperor

[1] It is very probable that Boccacio made the acquaintance of Petrarch when the latter visited Naples, before he proceeded to Rome to be crowned in the capitol.

Charles IV. He was also twice despatched on special missions to Pope Urban V.[1]

It was in 1353, that the "Decamerone" made its appearance. He wrote these tales, to quote his own words, "to drive away melancholy from the fair sex;"[2] but he had a deeper object in view, to wit, an exposure of the licentious habits of the Roman priesthood.

He afterwards regretted the issue of this work, and would willingly have suppressed many passages; but it passed rapidly from hand to hand, innumerable copies being made, and its fame being spread from one end of Italy to the other.

His conversion is curious. It is detailed at length in a letter to Petrarch, with whom he corresponded regularly after his mission to him on the part of the Florentines. One day, at Florence, he was waited upon by a venerable-looking monk, who desired a private audience. This being granted, the monk spoke to the following effect:—"I come to you," he said, "at the request of that holy man, Padre Petroni, of the order of the Carthusians, at Sienna, who, though he has never seen you, with God's will

[1] *Vide* Manni, Part I., chs, xiv. and xv. Also Tiraboschi, vol. v., p. 483.

[2] "Per carriar la malinconia dalle femine."

knows your heart. He charged me, on his death-bed, to point out to you the danger in which you stand if you do not reform your morals and your writings, which are instruments the devil makes use of to draw men into his snares by the allurement of sensual pleasures. You ought to blush at the use you are making of the talents which the Almighty endowed you with, for his glory. What recompense would not have been yours, had you employed them in his service? What, on the other hand, have you not to fear by waging war against decency, and by setting a bad example by your dissolute life and immoral writings? The holy father Petroni, now a saint in heaven, speaks to you by my voice. With his dying breath he charged me to make you acquainted with his earnest exhortations and prayers, that you may reform your present mode of living, and attend to your duties as a Christian. If you turn a deaf ear to my warning, assuredly you will die young, and eternal punishment will be the award of your disobedience. God revealed this to Padre Petroni."

The name of the old monk who thus addressed Boccacio was Giacomo Ciani, the countryman and friend of Padre Petroni, who died in the

year 1361, with the reputation of a saint, various miracles having been attributed to him both before and after his death. Padre Ciani added, that he had similar missions to perform in Naples, France and England, and that he had also a word for the ear of Petrarch. Boccacio, somewhat startled at the earnest manner of the mysterious visitor, inquired of him how it happened that his friend was so well acquainted with him, Petrarch never having seen either of them. The monk replied, that in a vision Padre Petroni had beheld our Saviour, in whose countenance he read the past, the present, and the future. To convince him of what he asserted, he mentioned a fact which Boccacio thought was a secret within his own heart. Superstitious by nature, this completely staggered him. He was no longer the same man. Death appeared always opening its jaws to receive him. He reformed his dissipated habits; and in the first flush of the zeal of a convert, he wrote to Petrarch to offer him his library, which consisted chiefly of profane writers, notifying his intention of bidding farewell to literature for ever.

Petrarch was not made of such soft clay as his friend. "To behold," he said in reply, "our Saviour with mortal eyes is, in sooth, mar-

vellous ; it is, however, still to be ascertained whether it is true. In all ages, men have endeavoured to conceal falsehood under the cloak of religion, making a pretended veneration for what is holy, a mask the better to conceal their evil designs. How often has not the name of Jesus Christ been made the text of vile impostures ? This is all I can say on the subject at present. Were you ignorant, before he informed you, that the lease of life still allotted to you on earth must be short ? A child in its cradle could have told you as much. When Padre Petroni's envoy visits me after his rounds, I shall be able to express a more decided opinion. His age—his countenance—his eyes—his deportment—his voice—his talk—will enable me to form a judgment."

Petrarch concluded his letter by offering to purchase Boccacio's library, if he insisted on parting with it ; but strongly dissuaded him from such a step. At the same time he made him a pressing invitation to come and stay with him.[1]

This letter was balm to the wounded spirit of Boccacio. The advice of the monk was not, however, altogether thrown away upon him.

[1] Petr. *Sen.*, lib. i., ep. 4.

He reformed his morals, and, though he did not part with his library, he exerted himself to prevent the circulation of the "Decamerone."[1]

After his conversion, Boccacio devoted himself with greater zeal than ever to the study of Greek literature. In the sketch of Petrarch's life, the labours of the two Florentines in that arduous and meritorious undertaking have been already alluded to. Leonzio Pilato, a Greek, well read in the literature of ancient Greece, arrived at Venice in the year 1360, on his way to Avignon. Boccacio induced him to change his plan, and to accompany him to Florence. He gave him an apartment in his own house, and provided him with everything of which he stood in need. He used all his influence, and finally succeeded in procuring for him the chair of Greek literature at the University of Florence, where Leonzio publicly expounded Homer. This was the first chair of Greek literature established in Italy. At a great expense, Boccacio collected all the Greek manuscripts he could hear of, and for the space of three years studied assiduously under the guidance of his protégé. At his instigation, and with his

[1] In a letter to Cavalcanti, Boccacio entreats him not to put the "Decamerone" in the hands of his friends.

assistance, Leonzio made a Latin translation of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey."[1] Manetti not unjustly observes, that the Florentines are indebted to Boccacio for all the knowledge they possess of the literature of Greece.[2]

In Petrarch's letter to Boccacio, there are many passages which throw considerable light upon this interesting subject. In a letter, dated 5th March, 1364,[3] he thus describes to Boccacio the departure of Leonzio. "This Leonzio, notwithstanding my entreaties, more obdurate than the rocks he is about to encounter, left me shortly after your departure. You are well acquainted with us both, and can scarcely judge whether he was most sad, or I most gay. Fearing lest from continual intercourse with him I should catch his ill humour (for the infirmities of the mind are as contagious as those of the body), I let him go, and gave him a Terence to beguile him on the way, a book of which he seemed especially fond, though I cannot explain what this most melancholy Greek has in common with that lively African; so true it is, that there are no dissimilarities that have not some point

[1] The MS. is preserved in the library at Florence.

[2] "Ut totum hoc quidquid apud nos Græcorum est, Boccacio nostro feratur acceptum."

[3] Petr. *Sen.*, lib. iii., ep. 6.

of resemblance. He embarked, uttering in my presence a thousand imprecations against Italy and the Latin name. He could scarcely have landed in Greece, when I received a letter from him more rugged, and of greater length, than his beard, in which he lauds Italy above the skies, and utters maledictions against Constantinople, and entreats me to invite him back, in terms of supplication such as Peter used when he found he was sinking."

Petrarch did not reply to this epistle, but the Greek embarked and perished, as we have already stated in a preceding chapter. Petrarch bewails and informs Boccacio of his loss in another letter, dated January, 1365.[1]

In 1368 Boccacio paid a second visit to Venice, in the hope of finding Petrarch; but the latter was absent on matters of importance at Pavia. He was hospitably received by Petrarch's daughter and her husband Francesco de Brossano. Writing to Petrarch shortly afterwards, Boccacio gives a description, in his happiest style, of the son-in-law and daughter of Petrarch. We also learn from this letter that Boccacio had a daughter, Violante, who died young.

[1] *Sen.*, lib. vi., ep. i. It concludes as follows: "Quem alia ad te epistola, Græcis escam vermibus destinatam, heu, Italis cibus est piscibus."

"I left Certaldo," writes Boccacio, "on the 24th of March, in the hope of finding you at Venice. Continual rains, the society of friends who would not allow me to depart, accounts of the bad state of the roads from travellers recently arrived from Bologna—all combined to detain me at Florence until, to my regret, I heard you had been called to Pavia. I was on the point of relinquishing my visit to Venice, but having some private affairs to settle, and urged, moreover, by the desire of making the acquaintance of two persons dear to you, your Tullia[1] and her husband, I determined to proceed.

"As chance would have it, I met Francesco di Brossano on the road; he will have told you what joy that meeting afforded me. After the usual interchange of compliments, and inquiries after your health, I had opportunities of admiring his noble figure, his elegant manners and conversation. I appreciate your choice—but how is it possible not to approve of all that you do? Our roads separated, and I embarked for Venice.

"After a few hours' repose at Venice, I called upon your Tullia. As soon as my name was mentioned, she hastened forth to meet me, as if

[1] Boccacio thus familiarly styles Petrarch's daughter. Petrarch was fond of giving names of his own choice to many of his friends. One of them he styled Socrates, another Lælius, &c.

it had been yourself: she blushed slightly at seeing me, and modestly casting down her eyes made me a curtsey; she then embraced me with the tender affection of a daughter. How great was my joy! I felt that she was only obeying your instructions, and I gloried in being so dear to you. After a few words, common to first acquaintances, we seated ourselves in the garden with some friends who had dropped in; she then offered me the use of your house, your books—everything you possessed. Whilst making me these offers, your little grand-daughter approached with a more modest mien than is usual in children of her age. She smiled at me before knowing me; I took her in my arms and kissed her tenderly. She reminded me of my own dear little girl who is dead—she bears a striking resemblance to her. If you do not believe me, ask Gugliamo of Ravenna, or our friend Donato; they will tell you that she had the same cast of countenance, the same smile, the same laughing expression in the eyes, the same movements of the body, but my daughter was a little taller and somewhat older. She was five years and a half when I beheld her for the last time. Otherwise the resemblance is complete, with the additional exception, that my little

girl had auburn hair, whilst yours is a blonde. Alas! how often, after embracing your little pet, did I not shed bitter tears to the memory of the departed one, stifling my sobs as best I could. You will understand my grief."

On his return to Florence from this trip to Venice, Boccacio was taken seriously ill, and for some time his life was despaired of. On his recovery, he undertook a great literary labour. He had—and on more than one occasion—rebuked the Florentines for their ingratitude to Dante. His voice was at length listened to. His fellow-citizens decreed, that he should hold public lectures to explain the "Divine Comedy." This led to his critical adalysis of that great poem, an analysis which only comprises the first seventeen cantos. The hand of death prevented its completion.

He survived Petrarch little more than one year. He expressed a wish to visit the tomb of his friend in Arqua. Hearing that Francesco di Brossano purposed erecting a monument to his father-in-law, Boccacio wrote to him on the subject. "The tomb," he said, "of a great man should either be unknown, or correspond in its magnificence to his fame!" Boccacio died at Certaldo on the 21st December, 1375. In

compliance with his expressed wish, he was buried in the Church of San Jacopo of the Augustines, at Certaldo, where there is a monument erected to his memory, bearing a Latin inscription of four lines, written by himself a short time previous to his decease :—

"Hac sub mole jacent cineres ac ossa Johannis;
Mens sedet ante Deum meritis ornata laborum
Mortalis vitæ. Genitor Bocchacius illi,
Patria Certaldum, studium fuit alma poesis."

He bequeathed his valuable collection of MSS. to his friend and confessor, father Martino di Segna, to be presented, on the death of the latter, to the convent of Santo Spirito, at Florence.

CHAPTER X.

Review of Boccacio's writings.—His Latin composition.—His poems.—Italian prose writings.—His eclogues.—La Teseide.—Il Filostrato.—L'Amorosa visione.—Il Ninfale Fiesolano.—Miscellaneous poems.—The Decamerone.—Il Filocopo.—La Fiammetta.—Il Corbaccio.—The Ameto.—His Life of Dante.—Comments on Dante.—His translations from the Greek.

THE writings of Boccacio may be classed under three distinct heads; his Latin compositions, his prose works in Italian, and his poems. His Latin writings consist of a work on the genealogy of the fabulous Gods,[1] of little or no interest at the present day, except as a memento of the literature of that century; a geographical treatise on the names of mountains, lakes, rivers, morasses, and seas,[2] which is the first specimen of a geographical dictionary after the revival of letters in Italy; a biographical dictionary of celebrated characters;[3] and sixteen Latin eclogues.[4]

[1] *De Genealogiâ Deorum.*

[2] *De Montium, Fluviorum, Stagnorum, et Marium Nominibus.*

[3] *De Casibus Virorum et Feminarum Illustrium.*

[4] Manni gives a detailed analysis of these Eclogues. Part i., ch. ii. *Vide* also Tiraboschi, vol. v., p. 341.

As a poet Boccacio ranks much lower than either Dante or Petrarch. On reading the sonnets of the latter, he was so much struck with their superiority over his own, that he committed all his minor poetical compositions to the flames. His "Teseide" is his best attempt in verse, and is, moreover, remarkable as being the first poem written in "ottave rime," of which, therefore, Boccacio is the inventor. This style of verse was afterwards adopted by Tasso and Ariosto. The "ottave rime" form a stanza of which six lines rhyme alternately, the seventh and eighth forming a couplet. For instance, take the opening stanza of the "Teseide,"—

"O sorelle Castalie, che nel monte
Elicona contente dimorate—
D'intorno al sacro gorgoneo fonte,
Sottero l'ombra delle frondi amate
Da Febo, delle quali ancor la fronte
Spero d'ornarmi sol che 'l concediate,
Le sante orecchie a' miei preghi porgete
E quegli udite come voi donete."[1]

---

[1] "And you, sweet sisters! who delight to dwell,
Amid the quiet haunts of Castaly,—
Playing beside the brink of that famed well,
And by the fount where springs the sacred tree,
Beloved by you and him, the God, whose shell
Resounds its praise; whose honour'd leaves shall be;
So let me dream! A poet's meed: O hear
His ardent prayer, if prayers to you be dear."

The "Teseide" is an epic poem, in twelve cantos, of which Theseus is one of the principal characters. The plot turns upon the love of two Theban youths, Arcita and Palemone, for Emilia, the sister of Hippolita, the Queen of the Amazons, whom Theseus had subdued, and then married. The poem ends with the nuptials of Emilia with Palemone. The poem is dedicated to Fiammetta, and in the prefatory letter the poet declares that his love for that lady is in a great measure revealed in the persons of his hero and heroine.[1]

Another epic poem in "ottave rime," entitled "Il Filostrato," comprises the history of the loves of Troilus and Cressida.

A poem in terza rima, entitled, "The Amorous Vision,"[2] a romance founded on a popular ballad,[3] and other short pieces, of no great poetical merit, are published in his works.

But the fame of Boccacio rests upon his prose writings, more especially upon the "Decamerone," in which he raised the Italian language to a point of perfection until then unknown. It

[1] "There are two things to prove that I composed this poem for you. One is, that, if your memory does not prove false, you will recognise in the adventures of the lover and the object of his affection, many things which occurred to you and me," &c.—*Extract from a Letter from Boccacio to Fiammetta.*

[2] *L'Amarosa Visione.* [3] *Il Ninfale Fiesolano.*

is to be regretted that the elegance and purity of style, and the rich flow of language of this remarkable production are polluted by the impurity of some passages.

At the time of the great plague in Florence, in the year 1348, seven ladies of that city, the eldest of whom was under thirty years of age, agreed with three young men of Florence to retire into the country, to escape the pestilential air of the city. For this purpose they selected one of the most beautiful villas in the neighbourhood of Florence,[1] about two miles outside the gates, where with impious recklessness they are supposed to have passed ten days in unbridled pleasure, regardless of the work of death which was taking place around them. One of these fair dames was elected alternately queen for the day, and each individual member was bound to narrate daily a story for the amusement of the rest of the company; hence the appellation "Decamerone."

The enchanting scenery in the neighbourhood of Florence, where these gay recluses had established themselves, the record of their walks, their numerous fêtes, and their repasts,

[1] *Vide* Manni, ch. ii., *Del Luogo e delle Persone intervenute al racconto delle Novelle.* One of the young men is supposed to have been the author.

afforded to Boccacio an opportunity of displaying all the treasures of his powerful and graceful pen. These stories, which are varied with infinite art, as well in subject as in style, from the most pathetic and tender, to the most sportive (and, unfortunately, to the most licentious), exhibit a wonderful power of narration, and his description of the plague at Florence, which serves as an introduction to them, may be ranked with the most celebrated descriptions which have descended to us. The perfect truth of colouring, the exquisite choice of circumstances calculated to produce the deepest impressions, and which place before our eyes the most repulsive scenes without exciting disgust, —the sympathy of the writer with his subject, which insensibly pervades every part, give to this picture that true eloquence of history which in Thucydides animates the relation of the plague in Athens. The events of which he was a witness had vividly impressed themselves upon his mind, and it was the faithful delineation of what he had seen which served to develope his talent.[1]

Few books can boast of such numerous readers, or so many commentators, as the "Deca-

[1] Sismondi.

merone." More than two hundred editions have been published in Italy—sixty in Venice alone—and it has been translated into every European language. The endeavours of the Roman Catholic priesthood to suppress it doubtless increased the circulation of the work. With an unsparing hand Boccacio attacked the cupidity and laxity of morals of the priests and monastic orders of Italy.

In the sixteenth century, the publication or sale of the "Decamerone" was formally prohibited by the Council of Trent. For nearly a hundred years it circulated in manuscript copies throughout Italy. The first printed copy appeared in 1470.[1] It was prohibited by Popes Paul IV. in 1555, and Pius IV. in 1559; but on the representation of Cosimo I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, its republication was allowed by Pius V. in 1566, and Gregory XIII. in 1572, on the condition of certain passages being omitted, and others modified. A committee of learned men was called together for that purpose, and the revised work was reprinted by the Giunti, of Florence, in 1573. It is known as the "Edizione dei Deputati."[2]

[1] Consequently it was one of the very first books printed in Italy.

[2] Manni, in his elaborate work on the "Decamerone" (for a copy of which I am indebted to the kindness of Signor Molini), in Part iii.,

In 1582, Salviati was entrusted with the preparation of a new edition. These revised editions, however, were not held in high estimation by the majority of the reading public, and towards the end of the sixteenth century the unmutilated work made its re-appearance.

Petrarch excuses the blemishes of the "Decamerone" on the plea of the peculiar circumstances under which it was written. He expresses his warm admiration of the language, and, as we have seen, he was occupied in translating the pathetic story of Griselda[1] into Latin a few days previous to his death at Arqua.

The hundred tales of Boccacio are founded in part upon old traditions, or upon facts which came under his own personal observation. Many are mere inventions, created by a most fertile imagination. With the sharp point of ridicule he holds up to contempt the vices of every class of society.

chap. x., gives the names of the committee and some curious details, as also a letter from Ferdinand de Medici to the Pope, written at the instigation of the city of Florence, complaining of the mutilation of the original work. In the regulations for its revisal, it was decreed that no scandalous mention should be made of "Preti, Frati, Abbati, Abbadesse, Monachi, Monache, Piovani, Proposti, Vescovi, o altre cose sacre, ma si mutassero i nomi, o si facesse in altro modo."

Manni also gives an account of the subsequent corrected editions.

[1] *Decamerone* (tenth day, tenth tale.)

The first work in Italian prose which Boccacio is supposed to have written, is the "Filocopo," or the history of the loves of Florio and Biancofiore, a chivalrous romance of the time of the crusades. "This work," says Maffei, "would be put on the shelf with all the other romances of that period, if it was not rescued from oblivion by many beautiful descriptive passages and sudden bursts of inspired language. Boccacio is said to have esteemed this as his best composition.

The work which ranks next to the "Decamerone" is his "Fiammetta."

The mistress of Boccacio here relates the history of her love; her first meeting with her lover, and her subsequent grief at his departure. This voluptuous description of the master passion bears the stamp of truth upon it. The glowing language is extremely elegant.

In a prefatory address to the ladies of Italy, Fiammetta says they will not find that her narrative consists of Greek fables adorned with many falsehoods, or Trojan battles steeped in blood, but rather of thoughts of love stimulated by much desire; of tears and heart-rending sighs and tempestuous thoughts, which robbed her of her sleep, and undermined that beauty

which she so highly prized.[1] The "Fiammetta" is divided into seven books.

In his fortieth year Boccacio wrote another work, entitled "Il Corbaccio," or the Labyrinth of Love, in which he revenges himself upon the whole of the fair sex, for the disdain he experienced at the hands of a widow.

The "Ameto," or comedy of the Florentine nymphs, is a pastoral intermixed with verses. The scene is laid in Etruria. Seven nymphs relate their adventures, and Boccacio is supposed to be the hero of each, with perhaps the same plausibility that Byron is represented by Don Juan, or Goethe by Wilhelm Meister. Salvini regards the whole as an allegorical fiction, the nymphs emblematically representing the virtues which gradually introduce themselves into, and subdue the rugged heart of the shepherd Ameto.

Boccacio's "Life of Dante" is, for many reasons, a remarkable production. It is important, forasmuch as it contains many details of interest respecting that illustrious man, and for Boccacio's appeal to Florence to render honour to its great citizen.

[1] Tiraboschi expresses a doubt whether the love of Fiammetta for Panfilo is in reality a history of the love of the daughter of King Robert of Naples for Boccacio, on the ground that the narrative does not tally with other accounts given by Boccacio in his other works.

"O ungrateful country!" (exclaims Boccacio) "what fit of insanity came over thee when, with unheard-of cruelty, thou didst drive into perpetual banishment thy noblest citizen, thine only poet * * * O miserable mother! Open thine eyes and blush at what thou hast done, esteemed wise among cities, at having hearkened to false counsels. * * * Why didst thou not emulate those cities still renowned for their praiseworthy deeds? Athens, one of the eyes of Greece, when mistress of the world in science, eloquence, and military fame; Argos, famous for her kings; Pilos, for its Nestor; Chios, Colophon and Smyrna, famous cities, did not think it unbecoming their dignity to contend for the honour of having given birth to Homer, each claiming the glory as its own. * * * Mantua, our neighbour, cherishes the memory of Virgil, who is held in such reverence, that his bust adorns the public squares, and his portrait the private dwellings of the citizens. * * *

"Thy Dante Alighieri is dead, in that exile which, jealous of his worth, thou didst inflict upon him; oh! crime hateful to record, that a mother should be envious of the glory of her son! Now he is dead, and thou mayest bid a truce to thy fears and thy injustice. Dead, he cannot do to thee that which, living, he never

did. He reposes under another sky, and never wilt thou behold his face again until the day on which thou shalt behold all thy citizens, and their crimes will be examined and punished by a just judge. Now that passions, hatred and animosities are buried in the grave, be again thyself; blush at having given the lie to thine ancient renown; prove thyself a mother, and not a step-mother; give thyself up to tears in memory of thy son—maternal pity to him whom, living, thou didst thrust from thy bosom. Become at least the possessor of his inanimate corpse; honour his memory by restoring to him the rights of citizenship in thy good graces. What are thy intentions? Wilt thou allow thyself to be put to the blush by barbarians, who not only reclaim the bodies of their dead, but take up arms, prepared to die in recovering them? Dost thou aspire to be thought a niece of Troy and grand-daughter of Rome? Truly, children should bear some resemblance to their parents. Priam, in his grief, not only claimed the corpse of the mighty Hector, but redeemed it at the price of gold. Rome had the bones of the elder Scipio brought from Linternum." [1]

[1] "Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore."
Childe Harold.

Historians disagree as to the removal of the bones of Scipio.

After enumerating the many cities which erected monuments in honour of Homer, Boccacio continues :—

"Endeavour, then, to be the guardian of the bones of thy Dante ; claim them—give proof of so much humanity. Supposing thou dost not wish to have them, wipe out at least a portion of the foul stain that marks thee, by claiming them—ask for them. I can assure thee, beforehand, that thy demand will not be granted ; but then thou wilt have shown the semblance of pity, and canst then inwardly chuckle at the refinement of thy cruelty. But wherefore should I urge thee on to this ? I am half inclined to think that, if the dead retain anything in common with what takes place on earth, the corpse of Dante would glide away from the spot where it is buried, sooner than return to thee ! He rests in the company of pleasanter companions than thou couldst give him. He sleeps at Ravenna, more venerable than thou ; and though its old age may partake somewhat of decay, it was once more flourishing than even thou hast been ; it is a general repository of sacred ashes, and it is difficult to tread without placing one's foot upon some hallowed spot. * * * Ravenna cherishes his ashes with reverence, as she does

the ashes of emperors and kings, and rejoices, in no small measure, that God has, with his other bounteous gifts, conceded to her the perpetual guardianship of so great a treasure as the body of him whose works excited the admiration of the universe."

This "Life of Dante," which is very brief, being little more than an outline, contains a passage which illustrates the reverence, amounting to awe, in which Dante was held by the lower classes after the appearance of his poem.

Walking one day in the street, Dante had to pass in front of a doorway at which a group of women were assembled for a friendly gossip. On his approach, one of them put her finger on her lips and exclaimed in a mysterious voice to her companions, "Hush! that is the man who can descend to the infernal regions and come away when he likes, and then writes what he has seen!" "True," said another, "it must be so, and that is why his face is so swarthy and his beard so black and curly—from the heat and smoke he has had to go through." Dante, says Boccacio, who overheard them, smiled and went on his way.

In the year 1373, a decree of the city of Florence, bearing date the 9th of August,

appointed Boccacio to expound Dante's poem publicly with the annual salary of one hundred florins. On the 3rd of October of that year, he held his first lecture in the church of St. Stephen, near the old bridge, to a crowded audience.[1]

These lectures induced Boccacio to write a commentary upon the "Divine Comedy," in which he critically examines and explains the literal sense and allegorical meaning of the poem. In this dissertation he displays great erudition. He had commented upon seventeen cantos when death terminated his labours.

The services rendered to the republic of letters by Boccacio, by the collection of valuable manuscripts, many of which he copied with his own hand, and his study of the literature of Greece, entitle him to the gratitude of every student and scholar.

[1] The decree commences as follows: "Pro parte quam plurimum civium civitatis Florentiæ desiderantium tam pro se ipsis quam pro aliis civibus aspirare desiderantibus ad virtutes, quam et pro eorum posteris ei descentibus, instrui in libro Dantis," &c.—*Vide* Manni, Part i., p. 100.

CHAPTER XI.

Zanobi di Strada.—Sacchetti.—Historians of the fourteenth century.—The Villani.—Conclusion.

THE other poets of the fourteenth century deserve a brief notice:—Zanobi di Strada and Franco Sacchetti. Zanobi was born in the year 1321, at Strada, a town situate about six miles from Florence. His father was the head of a grammar school at Florence, which enjoyed a high reputation. On his father's death, Zanobi, though only twenty years of age, succeeded to the head mastership. Through Petrarch's interest he obtained the appointment of secretary at the court of Naples, where the grand senaschal of the court took him under his protection. Through the influence of this personage (Niccolo Acciajuoli) the Emperor Charles IV. conferred upon him the poet's crown, at Pisa, in the year 1355. Filippo Villani classes him among the illustrious Florentines.

Franco Sacchetti was born at Florence in the year 1335, and was reputed one of the most elegant writers of his day. He was entrusted with many high offices of state. An edition of his novels was published at Florence in 1724.

Florence, no unworthy scion of imperial Rome, may proudly rear her head above many cities of Italy, as the cradle of genius and the birthplace of illustrious men.

The three great historians of the fourteenth century, Giovanni, Matteo and Filippo Villani, were citizens of Florence.

The precise date of the birth of Giovanni Villani is not known; it has, however, been satisfactorily ascertained that in the year 1300 he was present at the great jubilee at Rome. The effect produced upon him at the sight of the monuments of the past glories of the capital of the world, inspired him with the resolution of writing the history of his native city. He himself thus describes how the idea originated within him: — "Having taken part in that blessed pilgrimage to the holy city of Rome, the aspect of her great and ancient monuments, the histories of the mighty deeds of the Romans described by Virgil, Sallust, and others, who noted events both great and small, to serve as

examples to future generations, determined me to follow in their steps, though but an unworthy disciple. Wherefore, on my return from Rome, by the grace of God, in the year 1300, I set to work to compile the present history, with reverence for the Almighty and with the blessing of St. John, to the honour and praise of Florence."

The history of Florence by Giovanni Villani consists of twelve books. It extends from the foundation of the city to the year of the author's death, which occurred in 1348; an arduous undertaking, when we consider the few authorities he had at his command. Tiraboschi, whose opinion is entitled to respect, recommends this work as the best history of Florence and of the adjoining provinces, in so far as it relates to the times in which the author lived; but, as regards more ancient data, he says, that it contains many errors. He is of opinion, moreover, that Villani borrowed largely from the history written by Ricardano Malespini. However this may be, Villani has rendered incalculable service to his country and to his native city, by the compilation of a work which still ranks as a standard performance in Italy. Salvini is of opinion, that in point of elegance of diction and

purity of style, the history of Villani is superior to the more recent work of Guicciardini in the sixteenth century.

Sismondi formed a very high estimate of this historian, and quotes largely from him in his "History of the Italian Republics." He thus eulogises him in that work. "Amongst other victims, the plague carried away Giovanni Villani, the most exact, the most veracious, the most elegant, and the most animated historian that Italy ever produced."[1]

Giovanni held high official appointments. In 1316-17, he was one of the Priori, or ministers of state, of Florence. The failure of the great mercantile firm of Bonaccorsi, in 1345, in which he was a partner, cast a gloom over the autumn of his life. Without any fault of his own, he became the inmate of a debtor's prison. He fell a victim to the plague in 1348.

On his death, his brother Matteo continued the history of Florence up to the year 1363, when he also was carried off by the pestilence, on the 12th July of that year. The style of Matteo is reputed greatly inferior to that of Giovanni; but the author has shown great assiduity in the collection of his materials. He

[1] Sismondi; *Hist. des Républiques Italiennes*, vol. iv., p. 254.

had nearly finished the eleventh book when he died.

His son Filippo took up the narrative, and added forty-two chapters. The younger Villani, however, has a higher and more original claim to distinction as the author of a biographical work of great interest, "The Lives of Illustrious Florentines."[1] It is the first national literary history published at Florence, and has rescued from oblivion many interesting facts respecting the learned men of Italy. The first Italian edition of this work was published by Mazzuchelli, in 1747. It was originally written in Latin.[2] In the year 1404, Filippo Villani was appointed public lecturer on Dante at Florence. He died in the following year.

I have now brought the reader to the threshhold of the fifteenth century—a century which, compared with the brilliant light of the fourteenth, is cast into the shade. But the seed was sown through the length and breadth of the land, and the good grain sprang up. If, for nearly a century, the muses remained in a dormant state in Italy, the study of the classics increased; universities, academies, schools for

[1] *Storia degli uomini Illustri Fiorentini, da Filippo Villani.*
[2] Tiraboschi.

the fine arts, scientific societies, were founded in every direction, the fruits of which are visible in the rich harvest of the sixteenth century. The art of printing, introduced into Italy almost immediately after its discovery, increased the love of study by providing food for the mind; and when the dawn of the sixteenth century broke, a glorious list of names was gradually unfolded—of names illustrious in every branch of literature, art and science. Suffice it that we name an Ariosto, a Tasso, a Machiavelli, an Alamanni, a Raphael, a Titian, a Michael Angelo, and a Correggio, and such patrons of art as Leo X., the Medici, the royal houses of Este and Gonzaga, and other princes of Italy.

APPENDIX.

THE BISHOP OF LOMBES.

On the death of the Emperor Henry VII., two candidates claimed the imperial crown: Louis, Duke of Bavaria, and Frederick of Austria. The latter was defeated and made prisoner at the battle of Muhldorf (1322). He had his liberty, in 1325, by a formal resignation of his claims. Louis found a formidable enemy in the Pope. It had ever been the prerogative of the Papal See to sanction the nomination of a new emperor: Louis, a bold and proud spirit, despised what he regarded as an empty ceremony. John XXII. asserted the rights of the Church, and summoned him before his tribunal. On the refusal of Louis to comply, the Pope issued a Bull declaring that he had forfeited his claims to the empire, and prohibiting his assumption of that title. Louis replied by a counter-edict, in which he accused the Pope of heresy, and summoned him to answer the charge before a general council. A schism in the powerful order of the Cordeliers, many of whom sided with Louis, added to the acrimony of the quarrel. It was on this occasion that Ockham, one of the most distinguished of the order, exclaimed to Louis: "Prince, defend me with your sword, and I will defend you with my pen." The dissenting Cordeliers were received by the Bavarian with open arms. A series, unequalled in history, of Papal Bulls and imperial edicts followed. Louis was better skilled with the sword than with the pen. On the 23rd of October, 1327, he entered Italy at the head of an army. Pope John immediately issued a Bull of excommunication against him, and placed an interdict upon Rome, in case it should receive him. In despite of the Pope and the interdict, Louis entered Rome on the 7th of January, 1328,

his first act being to declare the Pope deposed, and to appoint in his stead one of the schismatic priests, as Nicholas V.

On the 17th of January, Louis received the imperial crown in the Vatican. It was at this juncture that Jacopo Colonna, Petrarch's friend, did a deed of daring which would have rejoiced the heart of a Cœur-de-Lion himself.

It was important that the Bull of John XXII. should be made public in Rome, no easy task when the city was occupied by the imperial troops. The noble Colonna volunteered his services. Accompanied by four devoted followers, masked, and armed to the teeth, he entered Rome and drew rein on the place of St. Marcel. Having read aloud the Papal Bull, he, in a loud voice, declared that there was no other Pope than John XXII.; that the person who styled himself emperor was an excommunicated impostor, and he offered to maintain the same with his sword. Having nailed a copy of the Bull to the doors of the church of St. Marcel with a dagger, he put spurs to his horse and reached Palæstrina in safety, none of the astonished multitude daring to oppose his retreat. The emperor, who was attending mass, on being informed of what had occurred, was exasperated beyond measure, and gave chase, but in vain. On the following day he convoked an assembly of the principal citizens of Rome, in which sentence of death was pronounced against Pope John, as guilty of high treason, insomuch as he had usurped the rights of the emperor. Robert, King of Naples, Lord of Avignon, a warm supporter of the Pope, was sentenced to be burnt as a heretic. On his return to Avignon, Jacopo Colonna was received with great acclamations of joy; and the Pope conferred the See of Lombès upon him as a recompense for his services.

THE DEATH OF LAURA.

Petrarch made a note of the death of Laura on a sheet of paper, which he pasted on the back of the binding of a manuscript copy of Virgil, which is preserved in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. This note has led to many controversies; but its authenticity is satisfactorily proved in De Sade's "Pièces Justificatives" to his "Mémoires pour la vie de Petrarcque."

The note is written in Latin, as follows:

" Laura propriis virtutibus illustris meis longum celebrata carminibus, primum oculis meis apparuit sub primum adolescentiæ meæ tempus anno Domini 1327, die sextâ mensis Aprilis, in Ecclesiâ Sanctæ Claræ Avenionensis, horâ matutinâ, & in eadem civitate, eodem mense Aprilis, eâdem die sextâ, eâdem horâ primâ, anno autem 1348 ab hac luce lux illa subtracta est cum ego forté tunc Veronæ essem heu facti mei nescius; rumor antem infelix per litteras Ludovici mei me Parmæ reperit anno eodem, mense Maio, diè decimâ nonâ manè. Corpus illud castissimum atque pulcherrimum in loco Fratrum Minorum repositum est ipso die mortis ad vesperam. Animam quidem ejus, ut de Africano ait Seneca, in Cœlum unde erat, rediisse persuadeo mihi. Hoc autem ad acerbam rei memoriam amarâ quidem dulcedine scribere visum est hoc potissimum loco, qui saepè sub oculos meos redit, ut scilicet mihi esse deberet quod amplius mihi placeat in hac vitâ & effracto majori laqueo, tempus esse de Babylone fugiendi crebrâ horum inspectione, hâc fugacissimæ ætatis existimatione commovear quod praeviâ Dei gratiâ facilè erit praeteriti temporis curas supervacuas, spes inanes & inspectatos exitus arciter ac viriliter cogitanti."

TRANSLATION.

" It was on the 6th of April, 1327, at Avignon, in the church of St. Clara, at the first hour of the morning, that I first beheld Laura, illustrious by her own virtues, and whose charms I have so long praised in my verses. That light vanished from the world in the same city, on the same day, at the same hour, in the year 1348. I was then at Verona, unconscious of my misfortune, the news of which reached me on the 19th of May following, in a letter from my friend Louis.

" Her beautiful and chaste body was interred the same evening in the church of the Cordeliers. I doubt not that her soul has returned to heaven, whence it came—to quote the words of Seneca, speaking of Scipio Africanus. To remind me of this great loss, I thought fit to write this in a book which I am constantly reading. I find therein a pleasure mixed with bitterness. For, continually reminded of my loss, I feel that there is nothing else to give me pleasure in this life, that it is time I should renounce Babylon—as the great tie which unites me to it has been severed. With God's

blessing the task will be easy, when my mind, strengthened and invigorated, recals the needless cares and deceptive hopes, and the unforeseen results of my undertakings."

Francis I., King of France, passing through Avignon, in the year 1533, paid a visit to the tomb of Laura, and wrote the following epitaph :—

"En petit lieu compris vous pouvez voir
Ce qui comprent beaucoups par renommée,
Plume, labeur, la langue et le Savoir
Fuent vaencus par l'ayment de l'aymée.
O gentil ame estant tant estimée,
Qui te pourra louer gis en se taisant?
Car la parole est toujours reprimée,
Quand le sujet surmonte le disant."

ARQUA.

"Arqua is twelve miles from Padua, and about three miles to the right of the high road to Rovigo is the bosom of the Euganean hills. After a walk of twenty minutes across a flat well-wooded meadow, you come to a little blue lake, clear, but fathomless, and to the foot of a succession of acclivities and hills, clothed with vineyards and orchards, rich with fir and pomegranate trees, and every sunny fruit-shrub. From the banks of the lake the road winds into the hills, and the church of Arqua is soon seen between a cleft, where the ridges slope towards each other, and nearly enclose the village. The houses are scattered at intervals on the steep side of these summits; and that of the poet is on the edge of a little knoll overlooking two descents, and commanding a view, not only of the glowing gardens in the dales immediately beneath, but of the wide plains above, whose low woods of mulberry and willow, thickened into a dark mass of festoons of vines, tall, single cypresses, and the spires of towns, are seen in the distance, which stretches to the mouths of the Po and the shores of the Adriatic. The climate of these volcanic hills is warmer, and the vintage begins a week sooner than on the plains of Padua. Petrarch is laid—for he cannot be said to be buried—in a sarcophagus of red marble, raised on four

pilasters, on an elevated base, and preserved from the association of meaner tombs. It stands conspicuously alone, but will soon be overshadowed by four lately-planted laurels. Petrarch's fountain —for here everything is Petrarch's — springs and expands itself beneath an artificial arch, a little below the church, and abounds plentifully, in the driest season, with that soft water which was the ancient wealth of the Euganean hills."—*From a Note to Childe Harold.*

THE END.

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